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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

OCTOBER 12, 1992

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CORRESPONDENCE

Bosnian reservations

To the editors:

I am flabbergasted at Aleksa Djilas's claim in "The Nation That Wasn't" (September 21) that, in Bosnia prior to the present war, "most Muslim leaders believed only a Muslim should be allowed full citizenship." Having visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and having observed for quite some time the activity of the main Muslim party, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), I do not believe this serious charge is true. I challenge Mr. Djilas to cite the names of such "Muslim leaders" and his sources for this assertion.

Mr. Djilas's article, notwithstanding his crocodile tears over the plight of the Muslims, is a thinly disguised plea, utilizing the bogey of "subjugation under Muslim rule" of Serbs and Croats, for the creation of a Muslim "reservation" or "Bantustan" in Central Bosnia. This has been a feature of Belgrade's plan for the destruction of multicultural Bosnia and Herzegovina from the beginning—referred to in the Serbian press as "Alija's Pashaluk."

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
Staff Writer, San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco, California

Moving picture

To the editors:

Sean Wilentz's careful analysis of the sly social and moral commentary in George Bellows's masterful *Stag at Sharkey's* was provocative and valuable ("Low Life, High Art," September 28). Yet there may be an even more startling aspect to this fascinating work. The more one looks at the painting, the more it appears that Bellows was also, inadvertently perhaps, anticipating in visual terms the burgeoning urban experience of mass entertainment, the movies. This possibility arises in the peculiar manner that Bellows positions the horizontal line of the canvas with the floor of the ring, suggesting strongly the illusion of a rectangular screen, rather than a three-dimensional space, on which the battlers are depicted as "larger than life."

The impression is further enhanced by the way he distances the crowd in the foreground so it uncannily appears to be "watching" a movie on a large screen, not attending a live sporting event. The painting's point of view puts the observer viscerally into the picture as a member of the audience several rows back. Bellows's projections of mass moviegoing are even more intriguing when one realizes he was here working before that new art had taken its place as *the* 20th-century entertainment spectacle, and movie screens had barely graduated from the nickelodeon stage.

MARK SCHAFFER
Rockville, Maryland

Great Scott

To the editors:

A small error in a valuable article: writing on Walter Scott in "Falling Out of the Canon" (August 17 & 24), Irving Howe follows David Daiches and wrongly refers to Jacobitism as "the Good Old Cause." That phrase denotes a very different struggle—the 17th-century Puritan attempt to establish a commonwealth instead of a monarchy. Various examples of this usage exist, including Dryden's defense of Charles II and his Catholic brother James against Protestant clamor over the invented "Popish Plot":

> "the Good Old Cause reviv'd a Plot
> requires.
> Plots, true or false, are necessary things
> To raise up Common-wealths and ruin
> Kings."
> —*Absalom and Achitophel*, lines 82-84

Otherwise, Howe's piece is first-rate. His contention that Scott lacked emotional commitment to the past he fictionalizes is apt, and I would go further. On examination, Sir Walter's noble Jacobites invariably turn out to be pathetic, mad, venal, or, if female, in need of a good bourgeois husband instead of political involvement. Scott not only knew that the Stuart cause was lost, he promoted the new order that had doomed it.

ELISABETH BROCKING
U.S. Embassy, Madrid

Couch potato

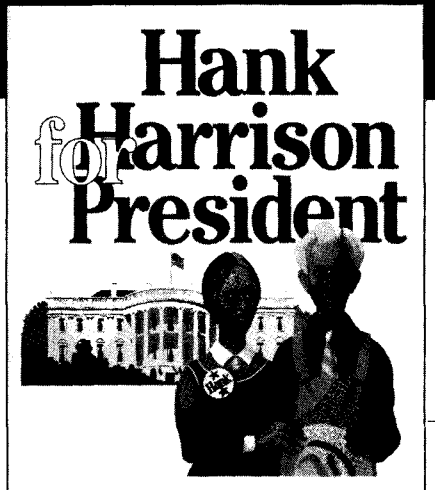
To the editors:

Roger Rosenblatt's Woody Allen exegesis ("Bananas," September 21) appeared in the same issue as David Stern's "The Ego and the Yid," an amusing coincidence given the drubbing psychoanalysis—or at least Woody Allen's psychoanalysis—has received because of the revelations that Allen was having an affair with the young adopted daughter of his girlfriend.

When I think about Allen's attraction to Soon-Yi Previn, who from all accounts seems to be rather passive, bland, and unformed, I see a link to his years on the couch. In the psychoanalytic relationship,

"Great political satire!"
— Bob Dole

"It's funny!"
— Mario Cuomo



A NOVEL BY
Fred J. Eckert

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the patient experiences his doctor as a neutral presence, one who does not judge, one who maintains the analytic incognito so that the patient, the analysand, is free to project and associate as he will. The resulting relationship is called transference, and it is through this transference that the work of psychoanalysis is achieved, as the analysand relates to the unseen presence in the chair as anyone and everyone, unfettered even by eye contact.

Allen seems to have found in this young woman, about whom he has said, "She turned my life around," someone who offers a similar sort of blank screen against which he can project his fantasies. In psychoanalysis, it could be said that there is no right and wrong. But the purpose of psychoanalysis is to help people conduct the rest of their lives with more self-knowledge, and with some understanding of the ways in which the past interacts with the present. As Freud proposed it, "Where Id was, Ego shall be." Allen seems to have lost his way, and has adopted aspects of psychoanalysis as a way of life rather than as a means toward a more enlightened life.

KATHARINE WEBER
Bethany, Connecticut

Pruning

To the editors:

Jesse Furman claims that total environmental protection spending has declined by 40 percent under the Weld administration ("Broken Records," August 31). In 1988, the year when Massachusetts spending was at its highest, the environmental operating budget was $173.2 million. True enough, this year the figure is down to $136.5 million, but of that decline, $31 million is directly attributable to the transfer of police expenses to a different agency. In real terms, the percentage of down-sizing from '88 to '92 is 3.4 percent. More importantly, this modest decline must be viewed through the prism of Governor Weld inheriting a billion-dollar deficit and since managing to balance three budgets without raising taxes.

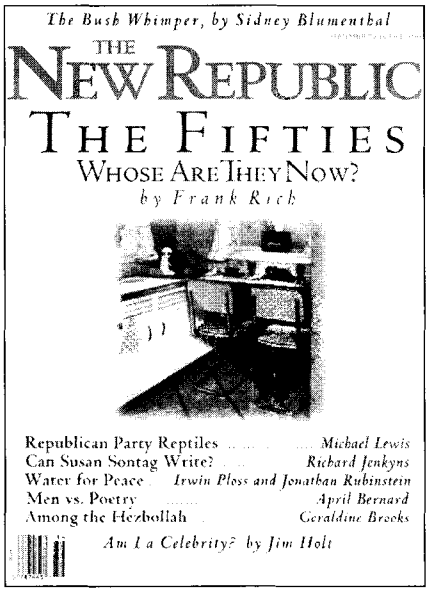
Governor Weld, a robustly self-proclaimed libertarian, has indicated loud and clear that in this instance, the environment is the exception that proves the rule. Here he believes more government action is desirable. Bill Clinton has served for twelve years, Bill Weld for twenty months. Already Weld is ahead of the curve on rivers, air quality, recycling, land acquisition, and a host of other environmental issues.

SUSAN F. TIERNEY
Secretary, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Boston, Massachusetts

Zone defense

To the editors:

It is really quite remarkable that twelve years after New York Democratic Congressman Robert Garcia and I introduced the first federal Enterprise Zone bill before Congress, so many commentators still can't figure out what Enterprise Zones are all about. In her article ("Twilight Zone," September 7), Jennifer Pitts writes, "The idea behind enterprise zones is that tax breaks draw businesses to areas that they wouldn't otherwise touch." But that is not at all the idea behind Enterprise Zones. The idea is not to relocate existing businesses (although some of that may occur), but to create new businesses,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Am I a Celebrity? by Jim Holt

new jobs, and new wealth by getting capital into the hands of low-income entrepreneurs. Supporters of Enterprise Zones believe entrepreneurship, private property ownership, and homeownership are the keys to creating jobs, opportunity, and economic growth in the inner cities.

The Bush Administration is under no illusion that Enterprise Zones would coax large, existing firms to move to Enterprise Zones, where at least one-third of their employees would have to be Zone residents. But for new or expanding small businesses, even a little extra capital can make the difference between success and never getting off the ground.

That's why the Enterprise Zone bill proposed by the Democratic leadership in the Senate is so perverse. It includes no capital gains incentives at all. It is an Enterprise Zone bill in name only.

Ms. Pitts's view of Enterprise Zones as part of a shell game in which enterprises and jobs can only be shifted from one community to another, without any net economic growth, is in error. The genius of entrepreneurial capitalism is that it allows individual entrepreneurs to transform the capital stock into new job-creating enterprises.

State-sponsored Enterprise Zones like the one Ms. Pitts visited in Baltimore have created or saved more than a quarter million jobs and generated more than $28 billion in new investment. But only the federal government has the power to provide the incentives that matter most to low-income entrepreneurs.

A quarter-century has now passed since Robert F. Kennedy—one of the intellectual founding fathers of Enterprise Zones—wrote that "the most effective way to encourage new enterprise in urban poverty areas is through tax incentives." Almost four months have passed since the riots in Los Angeles. Yet China, of all places, has full-blown Enterprise Zones while New York City and L.A. do not.

JACK KEMP
Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development
Washington, D.C.

Don't flaunt it

To the editors:

I was happy to read that business at the Palmyra Hotel should pick up now that the Hezbollah have left town (Geraldine Brooks, "Baalbek Postcard: With the Hezbollah," September 7 & 14). It may be a while, however, before we see the likes of that day in 1874 when Goethe, already dead forty-two years, signed the visitors' book.

STEFAN ROSENBERGER
West Caldwell, New Jersey

To the editors:

In "Shaky Foundation" (September 7 & 14), Jim Garrison is described as "flouting a cursory knowledge of things Russian." Were you dead, drunk, or only dazed with too much sun when you edited this piece? Naturally what the author meant was not "flout" (to treat with disdain, scorn, or contempt) but "flaunt" (to parade or display ostentatiously). I first spotted this particularly ludicrous malapropism on the marquee of a porno film theater in Portland, Oregon, about twenty years ago. It stated that the characters in the movie were "flaunting the morals of their society." I nearly laughed myself sick at the time.

ANNE D. WILLARD
Brooklyn, New York

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FROM WASHINGTON

Dead to irony

"You see," said George Bush about halfway into his speech September 17 in Enid, Oklahoma. Bush uses the construction "you see" the way other politicians use the word "frankly": as a subconscious signal that what follows is, if not an outright lie, then at least a disingenuous campaign artifice. "You see," he said, "I believe our tax system is fundamentally the product of a wartime economy. The cost of fighting two world wars and a cold war vastly expanded the number of people who had to pay taxes and raised marginal tax rates."

The Enid speech was billed as one of the early products of the Jim Baker team's salvage job on George Bush's campaign. The disquisition on cold war economics was by way of giving a philosophical framework to Bush's call for tax cuts, and illustrating the "profound" differences between himself and Bill Clinton. The trouble with this conceit is that Clinton has called for deeper defense spending cuts than Bush—something for which Bush has repeatedly criticized "my opponent." It is ironic, if nothing else, to hear Ronald Reagan's heir blaming today's tax rates on defense costs, then offering that analysis as a reason to vote for himself over an opponent who wants to spend less on defense than he does.

Bush went on, "High tax rates created pressure for exceptions—tax loopholes." He condemned "the discovery and enlarging of loopholes... by special interests seeking favored treatment." All fair enough, except that this very speech began with a passage of lavish praise for Oklahoma Senator Don Nickels for "taking the lead" in pushing for expanded loopholes for independent oil drillers, who are already among the leading "special interest" beneficiaries of our tax code.

A highly developed sense of irony is not an essential quality for a president of the United States, maybe not even a desirable one. But George Bush is dead to irony. No one expects a president to put intellectual consistency above the needs of re-election. And perhaps inconsistency is not as bad as lying (saying, for example, that you were "out of the loop" during Iran-contra). But at a certain level of brazenness, logical inconsistency amounts to dishonesty. How can he mean what he says—or even have thought about it—if it is so self-contradictory? How can you trust a man who cares so little whether any given statement he utters follows logically from his past statements and actions? I used to complain that Jimmy Carter's governing philosophy was, "Today is the first day of the rest of your administration." Bush one-ups Carter: he reinvents himself sentence by sentence.

Sometimes the inconsistencies are a conscious strategy of having it both ways. On abortion, the Bushies put an absolute constitutional ban—no exceptions—in their platform, to appease the zealots, then drop broad hints that the candidate himself has more moderate views. (Bush even claimed not to have read his own platform.) On the Clinton draft matter, Bush tells radio host Rush Limbaugh the issue is "service to country." Then, when pressed about Dan Quayle and other Republican draft-avoiders, the Bushies insist that the issue is merely Clinton's "credibility," not his military record.

Such evasions are slick and irritating. But they are perhaps less dishonest than the self-reinvention going on in the Enid, Oklahoma, speech. Bush began this speech, at a campaign rally, by explaining that it was "not a rally speech." It was, rather, a "serious talk." Bush presumably will let us know when he *is* making a campaign speech and therefore we need not take it seriously. Actually, the distinction Bush likes to make between what he calls "campaign mode" and his other modes is one of his more charming bits of disingenuousness. It so clearly reveals his unspoken belief that when you are actually in "campaign mode," the normal rules of honest discourse don't apply.

Bush's theme in Enid was how George Bush differs from Bill Clinton. In short, Bush puts his faith in "individual working men and women," whereas "my opponent puts his faith in... government planners" and "European models" learned "at Oxford in the 1960s." Get ready: "From Santa Monica to Cambridge, my opponents are cranking up their models—ready to test them, on you."

This is a crude misrepresentation of both Clinton's views and Bush's own. As pointed out before in this space ("The IP Word," August 3), both candidates have a version of industrial policy. Bush's is, if anything, more like central planning, with its tax breaks for investments of particular types or in particular locations. Clinton's general emphasis is on more traditional government activities such as building roads and educating people. Furthermore, as we all know, the size and cost of government has increased under Bush's presidency—and would have increased just as much if his budgets had been enacted with no congressional interference.

Bush doesn't just run from his record; he runs from himself. The introduction of "Oxford" as a campaign theme is a move of almost comic desperation by a candidate who can't use "Harvard" this time around, since it's not available, and dares not use "Yale" for the obvious reason. In Enid, he accused Clinton of planning rule by "a new... elite of the so-called best and brightest," adding smarmily, "The best and brightest are right out here in middle America where you know what's going on."

I like that "so-called." "So-called" by whom? The label "best and brightest" is never applied without irony, to Clinton or anyone else. That phrase entered the language when it was used ironically by David Halberstam to condemn the architects of the Vietnam War. This is a war George Bush supported and criticizes Clinton for having ducked. If Bush did have a sense of irony, he'd be getting dizzy by now.

Not only did "my opponent" attend Oxford, but he "chose to run for office at an exceptionally early age" (because "he wanted to determine how the people's taxes should be spent"). By contrast, "I built a company from the ground up."

Let's leave aside the $300,000 from his uncle ($1.5 million in today's money) that paved the ground on which young George built his business. And if Bush really wishes to make an issue of the fact that "my opponent" has devoted his life to public service (Clinton's salary as governor has been $35,000 a year), perhaps we have reached such a level of cynicism about government that this is a clever strategy. But surely anyone with a drop of irony would pause, before embarking on this theme, to consider that he is introducing yet another issue on which the existence of Vice President Quayle complicates matters. Dan Quayle also practiced law very briefly before entering politics for good. Does that disqualify him to be president? And who picked Quayle, anyway?

If you're George Bush attempting to portray Bill Clinton as a member of the establishment elite and yourself as a product of middle America, it helps to have no sense of irony. But you're counting on the voters to be dead to irony themselves.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCTOBER 12, 1992

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

A few weeks ago, at a B'nai B'rith convention in Washington, Bill Clinton endorsed a hate crimes bill pending before Congress. Introduced by Representative Charles Schumer of New York, the bill would require harsher sentences for crimes "in which the defendant's conduct was motivated by hatred, bias, or prejudice, based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation of another individual or group of individuals." The Schumer bill has broad bipartisan support and may pass this session. There are only two problems with it. The bill appears to be unconstitutional, as the American Civil Liberties Union has testified, and it is also a bad idea.

Last June, in *RAV* v. *St. Paul*, the Supreme Court said the government cannot punish hate speech—such as racial epithets or burning crosses—simply to express disapproval of the underlying bigotry. This should mean the end of virtually all campus speech codes (See "Speech Therapy," July 13 & 20, 1992), as the University of Wisconsin recognized when it abandoned its code recently. But hate crimes—violent assaults that are motivated by bigotry—present a trickier constitutional question. Of course, you can be convicted for assaulting someone with a lead pipe. But can the government double your sentence because it abhors the opinions that motivated you to commit the crime? The *St. Paul* case, to its credit, seems to say no: "Special hostility toward the particular biases thus singled out is precisely what the First Amendment forbids."

The Schumer bill goes out of its way to punish opinions rather than conduct. Instead of defining hate crimes as a substantive criminal offense (which would have to be proved at trial), the bill requires federal judges to conduct an inquisition into a criminal's thoughts and beliefs at the sentencing stage, after he has already been convicted. This poses an unusual threat to civil liberties: in a sentencing hearing, all the procedural protections that apply at trial go out the window. Hearsay evidence—such as the fact that your neighbor heard you had a copy of *Mein Kampf* on your bookshelf—is admissible. So is illegally seized evidence. There is no right to cross-examine your accusers. And there is no requirement that your bigotry be proved beyond reasonable doubt.

In choosing this approach, Schumer is relying on the testimony of Laurence Tribe of Harvard, who defended the constitutionality of the hate crimes bill with the same fervor that he defended the Flag Protection Act of 1989. At a House hearing last July, Tribe insisted that there is no difference between the Schumer bill and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination. In fact, the difference should be familiar to first-year law students. To prove a violation of Title VII, the government focuses on your intent to commit an illegal act—such as your refusal to hire someone on the basis of race. But Title VII does not permit the government to probe the underlying political or social attitudes that might have motivated you to discriminate in the first place. Tribe's cavalier response was to dismiss the distinction between motive and intent as "phony . . . once you are looking inside the person's head, it doesn't much matter what you call it."

Other defenders of the Schumer bill invoke two recent Supreme Court cases for the claim that the First Amendment applies with less force during sentencing than at trial. One of the cases, *Barclay* v. *Florida*, indicated that the defendant's desire to cause a race war might be relevant to prove a separate element of the crime—such as the fact that it was committed in an especially cruel manner. The other case, *Dawson* v. *Delaware*, suggested that judges have broad discretion within an existing sentencing range to consider all sorts of relevant character evidence. But neither case said that the legislature can ratchet up the range of permissible sentences for crimes motivated by bigotry. Clarence Thomas, in fact, was the only justice in *Dawson* to suggest that the First Amendment is irrelevant at sentencing, and that a defendant can be punished for his "abstract beliefs."

Even if a federal hate crimes bill could be drafted to satisfy the Supreme Court—the least objectionable model is a California law that focuses squarely on conduct rather than motivation—it would still be ill-advised. There is no convincing evidence that the penalty enhancement laws adopted by twenty-seven states have achieved their stated goal of deterring hate crimes: on the contrary, according to statistics collected by the Anti-Defamation League and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, reports of physical assaults against Jews and gays have increased since the mid-'80s, when most of the state laws were adopted. (The ADL recorded 112 anti-Semitic assaults in 1980 and 950 in 1991.) The appropriate response to these distressing numbers is more accurate reporting of hate crimes, as required by Representative Schumer's valuable Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990, and more vigorous prosecution under existing laws. When bigots turn violent, they should be punished for what they do, not for what they think. •

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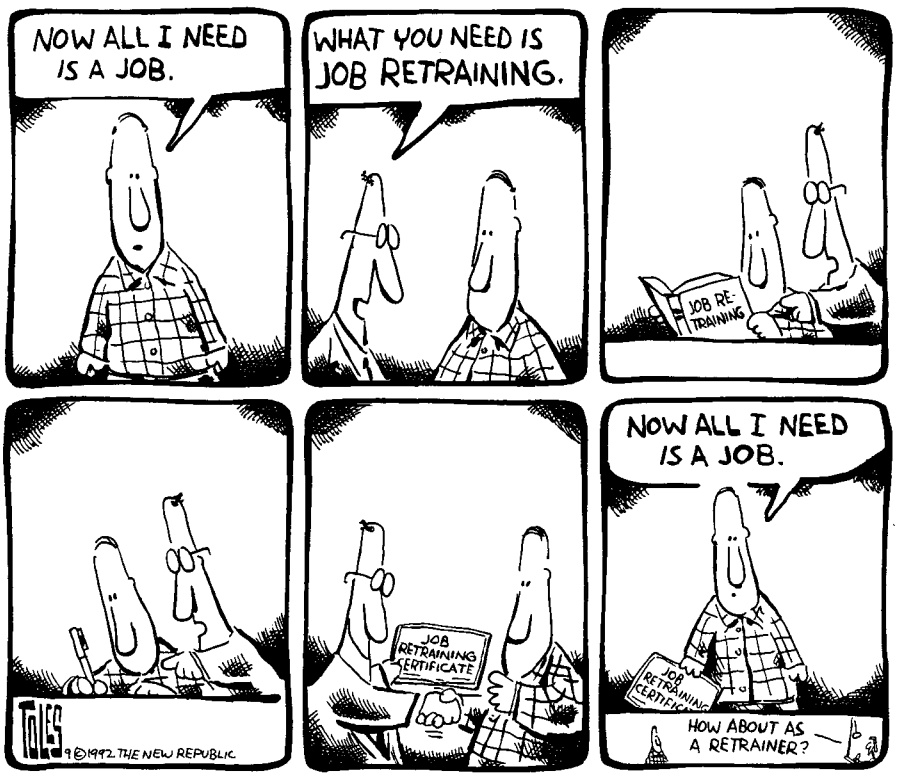
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "Rush, not just because I've been at the United Nations today, but you take a look at economies around the world and it's not the United States that is tail end Charlie out there at all. Other countries, regrettably, have it worse than we do, most of the industrial nations in Europe. And so, we've been through tough times, so has the rest of the world, and now who best to bring us out of the times."
—September 21, 1992, in an interview with Rush Limbaugh

COLD WAR RIPPLE: In all the hand-wringing over Europe, the real reason for the current morass has been obscured. Germany's high interest rates are caused by Germany's massive debt; and Germany went into debt in the late 1980s to keep what it regarded as Gorbachev's vulnerable reforms afloat and to capture a fleeting opportunity to reunify the country. The conventional wisdom was that it was a once-in-a-century opportunity, which merited a massive fiscal gamble. Of course, we now know the collapse of communism was imminent and Germany could have bided its time and achieved unification far more cheaply. France also misread the end of the cold war. Afraid that Germany would become a new superpower and turn eastward, the French conceived Maastricht as a way to keep Germany rooted in the West. Now we know that Germany's internal problems always would have overwhelmed her external ambitions, and by hard-wiring her to the West, Maastricht would drag every other European economy (and the American economy as well) into a Teutonic recession. And in these two fatal misjudgments, we should remember, the Europeans had the firm and unstinting support of President George Bush.

TOUGH CHOICE: George Bush is now running as an apostle of school choice, so passionately, in fact, that one might be forgiven for thinking that he has long supported the idea. Well, not exactly. As recently as 1989 he told a group of students, "Everybody should support the public school system, and then, if on top of that your parents think that they want to shell out in addition to the tax money, tuition money, that's their right. But I don't think they should get a break for that." Bush said he was intrigued by the concept of tuition tax credits to allow parents to put their children in private and parochial schools, but decided against it. We "can't afford to do that," he said, because of the budget deficit. The deficit, now $400 billion, was half as much in 1989.


NOW ALL I NEED IS A JOB.
WHAT YOU NEED IS JOB RETRAINING.
JOB RE-TRAINING
JOB RETRAINING CERTIFICATE
NOW ALL I NEED IS A JOB.
JOB RETRAINING CERTIFICATE
HOW ABOUT AS A RETRAINER?
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ACTION PAINTING: America is supposed to be an ethnic melting pot, and Jerusalem a mosaic. Keeping the metaphors coming, President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina calls his country "a living, breathing Jackson Pollack painting." Well, more or less. The Jackson Pollack works fine; it's the living and breathing that present difficulties.

BLESSED BE THE WIMPS: "In wartime and postwar movies, the USA was a land worth fighting for, even dying for. But the distance from *The Sands of Iwo Jima* to *Born on the Fourth of July*, from *The Song of Bernadette* to *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which paints Jesus as a lustful, lying wimp, is more than four decades."—from Patrick J. Buchanan's September 11 syndicated column

NEWS JUST IN: "Samuels had taken over one of the largest *New Yorker* offices and furnished it with rugs, large handsome bridge lamps, and other fancy appointments that must have brought Ross's disapproving tongue out of his mouth when he first beheld this change. He himself liked a plain newspaper-type office—'I don't want to look like the editor of *Vanity Fair*.'"—from *The Years with Ross*, by James Thurber •

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CONSUMED

WIRED

By Robert E. Sullivan Jr.

Standing in line at 8:30 a.m. in a Starbucks Coffee shop in downtown Portland, Oregon, I can barely coax the word "coffee" from my lips, but the businessman in front of me is barking out lengthy foreign phrases with the left side of his brain and using the right side to dial his cellular phone. "A Latte Macchiato grandé and an Espresso Con Panna," he says with our country's trademark crisply nasal pronunciation of Italian, "and make that to go." And then a businesswoman pipes up: "A skinny Caffe Latte." And another: "A decaf Caffe Mocha grandé, please." I've never mastered (or liked) the various combinations of creams, foams, milks, and cocoas, so I stumble to the counter, lay down $1.05, and ask for a large cup of good old American coffee, known here as a drip brew grandé. The woman behind the counter—the "barista," in Starbucks-speak—looks at me dumbfounded as I hold up the line. She points to two beer tap-like spigots, one offering an Indonesian brew, the other a Guatemalan, and asks the simple complicated question: "What kind?" A few minutes later, appropriately creamed and (unbleached) sugared, I stand at the four corners outside and survey the passing traffic of sleek white cardboard cups, high-tech aluminum thermoses, and spill-proof save-the-earth mugs. I smell my coffee, and it smells good.

Welcome to the great Northwest, gourmet coffee capital of the nation. It used to be that San Francisco was considered the coffee capital, but the center has quietly shifted. Starbucks, for instance, a market bellwether for bean analysts, has sixty-three stores in Seattle (not including the three kiosks at Sea-Tac), fourteen in Portland, and seven in San Francisco. (They went public in June and will open their first District of Columbia store next spring.) It 's said that along Broadway in the Capitol Hill area of Seattle you pass a pot of gourmet coffee on the average of one every 131 feet. Here in Portland, coffee is sold on the streets the way hot dogs are sold in New York City. From my office downtown, I am roughly equidistant from four Starbucks, cornered by four espresso kiosks, within striking distance of two Boyd's coffee stores, and a lazy walk to and a brisk walk back from the store whose name seems to say it all about coffee culture, Coffee People.

For a guy from New York, where coffee selection is generally defined by the words "light" and "sweet," coffee culture is a shock. Starbucks bars, which offer the high end of the high-end coffees, are sleek metal and faux marble, reminiscent of the finest in high-tech health clubs. Starbucks is for the powerful and the powerful wannabes. Coffee People, on the other hand, is early Grateful Dead concert, with drink names like Velvet Hammer, Mind Sweeper, and Black Tiger Slammer. Starbucks barista dress completely in black; Coffee People people are likely to wear Birkenstock sandals or Spandex bike shorts topped by the phrase "Espresso Thyself" on a Coffee People T-shirt.

Since moving here nine months ago, I have had many gourmet coffee experiences. I went to a coffee festival to drink coffee and look at coffee art (one title: "A Cup is a Cup is a Cup"). I went to Motor Moka, the drive-through coffee bar. And I overheard an anti-coffee comment coming from a 60-ish woman in a restaurant ("I can't stand the smell of coffee," she said, "but you know what my favorite smell is? Gasoline. I got a friend, has a gas station, I'd just sit there breathing it in all day. But I can't stand the smell of coffee.") Once I met a woman named Coco who said she was working on the premiere issue of a new coffee magazine that would in no way resemble the Seattle coffee magazine ("It's going to be a lot less masculine, a lot less yang," her partner said). I asked Coco where she goes for coffee downtown and she looked at me as if I had asked her to compare her favorite European decaffeination methods in just 100 words. "You mean for just a regular, fresh, and locally brewed cup of coffee?" she asked. "You mean not an espresso drink or anything? Just a cup-of-coffee cup of coffee?" And then she sent me to Aroma, a sterile, museum-like place where they roast their own beans daily.

The concept behind selling all this gourmet coffee is along the lines of super-premium ice creams like Haagen-Dazs and Ben & Jerry's: you may not be able to buy a yacht or that new car or even make the mortgage payment, but you can carry to your desk at work the best damn cup of coffee money can buy. Indeed, the coffee craze may relate to a form of economic empowerment appropriate to recessionary but still status-conscious times. When Joe Tacoma buys a perfectly frothed latte, he is buying a coffee as good as any Ralph Lauren could buy—and he is buying a cup perfectly accessorized for his personal needs.

The reason coffee fares particularly well in the Northwest has to do with that ubiquitous goal that has rooted itself over the last twenty years in the Northwest's urban pockets. In a land where mountain bikes and windsurfing boards sprout from city cars, in the two states with the lowest church membership in the United States, coffee is the first-thing-in-the-morning, hands-on proof of that this-world goal. Drinking a cup of Starbucks, sipping espresso at Coffee People or outside at a Mount Hood Coffee kiosk is about more than drinking a great cup of coffee: it is about sipping the nectar of Quality of Life.

ROBERT E. SULLIVAN JR. is a Portland-based writer.

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What's that plan again, Bill?

WELFARE WAFFLE

By Mickey Kaus

> We will scrap the current welfare system and make welfare a second chance, not a way of life. We will empower people on welfare with the education, training, and child care they need for up to two years so they can break the cycle of dependency. After that, those who can work will have to go to work, either by taking a job in the private sector or through community service.
> —Bill Clinton, *Putting People First*

If Bill Clinton is elected president, the above paragraph will have had a lot to do with it. Clinton's proposed time limit on welfare has been his strongest signal—to the press as well as the voters—that he is not a cliché liberal. Neither Dukakis nor Mondale ever said anything like it. It's no accident that the welfare time limit was a feature of Clinton's earliest campaign speeches in 1991 as well as his most recent T.V. ads, which promise to "end welfare as we know it" (over a caption announcing, "Those Who Are Able Must Go to Work"). Clinton's welfare stand is both a symbol and a good part of the substance of his promise.

But it is also a symbol of his slipperiness. When it comes to welfare, reform is in the details. Other politicians have promised to "make" welfare recipients work, only to wind up producing a few ineffectual regulations. The welfare reform law enacted in 1988 was, according to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, going to "turn the welfare program upside down." It didn't. And despite the seeming clarity of Clinton's two-years-and-go-to-work position, it turns out that (surprise!) he has left himself a lot of room to maneuver. Clinton's plan might "end welfare as we know it." It might also perpetuate welfare as we know it. Nobody really knows, because nobody knows what Clinton's plan really is.

Some background: the federal government's main welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), sends checks to 4.8 million American families, the vast majority of which are headed by non-working single mothers. In 1981 Ronald Reagan prodded Congress into allowing states to impose various requirements on AFDC recipients. The states responded with a wave of experimental "welfare to work" programs.

One of these, called WORK, was started in 1982 by Arkansas Governor Frank White, the Republican who had ousted Clinton after the latter's first term. The WORK program, which Clinton continued when he regained the governorship, did not require recipients to work off their grants (so-called "workfare"). It basically required welfare recipients to join group "job search" classes, and then to search for jobs on their own under the supervision of a caseworker. A few recipients were assigned "work experience"—that is, they performed unpaid work for public and private employers, the idea being to offer them some training and exposure to the labor market. Such "work experience" was usually limited to three months. A study by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) showed that WORK was a "moderate" success: of those who went through the program, 33 percent were still on welfare 3 years later, compared with 40 percent of those who didn't go through the program.

Such mildly promising results prompted Congress in 1988 to pass Moynihan's Family Support Act, a law that Clinton helped shape as head of the National Governors' Association. The Family Support Act doesn't "make" welfare recipients work either. Rather, it allows states to provide day care and then tell welfare mothers they must do *something* to get themselves ready for the job market. That something is typically attending the training and education programs that, according to the Act's untested operative theory, will help them land "good" jobs. But about half of welfare recipients, mainly mothers with young children, are excused from these requirements. Of the remaining recipients, the Act requires only that by 1995 the states get 20 percent "participating" in some activity.

Clinton's Project Success, started in 1989, is a fairly typical Family Support Act effort. Unlike its WORK precursor, it steers recipients mostly into classrooms. Of approximately 27,000 Arkansas welfare recipients, only about 4,000 are "participating" in any one month—and 65 percent of them are in some type of education or training program. About 13 percent are in "job search." Fewer than 5 percent—a grand total of 194 Arkansans—are assigned to unpaid "work experience."

Clinton boasts that the MDRC has declared Project Success "one of the three best programs in the country." But, as David Whitman of *U.S. News & World Report* has noted, the MDRC studied the earlier WORK program, not Project Success. (And recent MDRC studies suggest that the earlier program's approach—encouraging recipients to take jobs quickly rather than offering elaborate training—may be more effective.) More important, Project Success isn't what Clinton is now proposing. Specifically, Project Success doesn't tell welfare recipients that they "have to go to work" after two years. As a presidential candidate Clinton appears to be promoting something much tougher than what he's actually tried as governor.

How much tougher? The answer, and the fate of Clinton's reform, depends on his response to seven questions, most of which he hasn't answered—but some of which he has, in ways that do not inspire confidence:

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1. What happens during the first two years on welfare? Clinton is going to offer recipients "the education, training, and day care they need." But will he require all of them to take advantage of this offer? Bruce Reed, Clinton's deputy campaign manager for policy, says he sees "no reason why we would do that." He notes, however, that Clinton plans to spend more money ($1 billion to $2 billion in the first year) on education and training, which may indicate that he wants to boost "participation" above the Family Support Act's 20 percent requirement. How much? Clinton isn't saying.

2. After two years, do the checks end? David Ellwood, a Harvard welfare expert, has proposed making cash welfare temporary. After eighteen to thirty-six months, the welfare checks would stop coming, and the ex-recipients would be offered day care and minimum-wage jobs (plus a few thousand dollars in child support). Clinton praises Ellwood in his speeches, but all signs indicate that Clinton would not actually stop the checks after two years. Instead, the checks would keep coming, with recipients being "required" by welfare officials to work, on pain of being "sanctioned" (see Question 3). Unfortunately, "requiring" recipients to work while continuing to send them checks is an inherently cumbersome, bureaucratic process. Studies show that even when welfare caseworkers play hardball, it's difficult to get more than half the recipients to attend education and training courses, much less to work.

3. What is the sanction? Suppose after two years a welfare mother says, "The hell with you, Bill Clinton, I'm not working." After all the requisite notices and hearings, how is she penalized? Clinton told Jason DeParle of *The New York Times* that he would only apply the "sanction" available under current law, which means a recalcitrant welfare recipient could not be kicked off welfare. She would only lose that portion of the check earmarked for her own (as opposed to her children's) support. That's a maximum penalty of $29 a month in Arkansas, out of a combined monthly welfare and food stamp benefit of $496. In California the penalty is $90 out of $850 in aid. "I don't think you should punish the kids," Clinton told DeParle (though the "kids'" check goes to the mother, not her children).

4. Can you get out of working by going to school? Clinton typically presents his proposal as a "strict time limit for AFDC recipients." Two years and you "have to go to work." No nonsense. But in a recent speech in Jonesboro, Georgia, Clinton opened up a big potential loophole: recipients, he said, would have to work "after two years, *or after the end of an education-and-training program.*" Does this mean recipients can avoid work by attending a succession of classes, much as draft-age men avoided Vietnam by attending college? Can a recipient enjoy two years of benefits and then sign up for a training program just when the work requirement looms (the way, say, someone might have signed up for a ROTC program after getting his induction notice)? Reed says Clinton merely meant that if a recipient was in a "specific degree program" lasting more than two years and was "making real educational progress" that she should be able to "get an extra six to twelve months to find a job."

5. How much work? In Arkansas, the maximum AFDC grant for a mother with two children is $204 a month. Clinton could require work in community service jobs at the minimum wage, which would amount to eleven hours of work a week. But what about the mother's food stamp grant, which is $292 a month? Must she work that off too? If not, she'd be working eleven hours for $496 in total monthly benefits, the equivalent of $10.40 an hour—a much better job than many welfare recipients are likely to get in the private sector. President Bush, in a July 31 proposal largely ignored by the press, urged that states be allowed to make welfare recipients work off their food stamps as well as AFDC. It's less clear what Clinton will do.

6. What if you leave the welfare rolls and come back? Do you get another two years of cash assistance without having to go to work? Or is Clinton's "two years" a once-in-a-lifetime dispensation? The question is important, not because recipients would intentionally leave welfare and then go back on, but because there is naturally a constant movement off and back on welfare, as people get jobs and then suffer setbacks. If they all get two years of cash every time they slip back, then welfare can remain something like a "way of life," which is what Clinton says he wants to avoid.

7. Who's excused? As noted, about half the caseload is currently exempt from the Family Support Act's "participation" requirements. States are permitted to excuse mothers with children less than 3 years old, though Arkansas only excuses mothers with children under a year. But what if a welfare mother has another kid? Under the Act, she gets a whole new exemption, until her child reaches the requisite age. Under Ellwood's proposal, she wouldn't be excused from having to work. Again, the issue is important, not because mothers will necessarily have kids to avoid working, but simply because if you allow the another-kid loophole you allow more mothers to stay on the dole for longer periods of time. Reed says, "We haven't addressed that exception."

Clinton will be tempted to beat a retreat on each of these questions, most obviously because government employee unions (early supporters of his candidacy) are terrified that hundreds of thousands of welfare recipients might eventually be placed in public jobs that union members are now doing. Nor was it encouraging when Clinton addressed black audiences—at the NAACP convention last July, and in central Los Angeles in September—and didn't dare mention the welfare time limit. If Clinton does use all his wiggle room, he could proclaim a two-year time limit while ending up with a program that was not much more than an ambitious version of the Family Support Act—making a few more recipients "partici-

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pate" in education and training, but "requiring" only a tiny percentage to actually perform a few hours of work if they don't get off welfare.

Does this mean Clinton's a welfare fraud? No. Even the full-waffle scenario would still amount to an improvement over the status quo. But it's depressing that on this subject, where Clinton has both genuine expertise and a seemingly bold new plan, his presidency may offer much less: mild reforms in fancy revolutionary packaging, a dreary politics of less-than-meets-the-eye.

The best hope for a real transformation of welfare (and the welfare-dependent underclass) may not be that Clinton will have a sudden infusion of courage, but that he'll have an infusion of fear. Clinton's anti-welfare promises may be *so* critical to his electoral strategy—defusing the "values" issue, winning over the "middle class," etc.—that he doesn't have the option of failing to deliver on them in his first term. Suppose, in 1996, only 195 welfare recipients in the state of Arkansas are actually working for their welfare. Roger Ailes could make a nice little negative ad.... •

A constituency coup.

JEWS FOR BILL

By David Twersky

"Fuck 'em," Secretary of State James Baker allegedly said earlier this year, when a GOP official complained that anti-Israel policies would cost the president Jewish support in 1992. "They didn't vote for us" in 1988.

Accurately reported or not, the remark captured the spirit of late '91 and early '92, when Bush, still flush with his victory over Iraq, appeared politically secure. Now Bush is in trouble, and the Jewish vote will figure prominently in a number of critical states. In 1988 Bush won something like a third of Jewish votes. Polls now show his support, which had dipped as low as 10 percent a few months ago, at around 20 percent. But even a 20 percent vote could spell defeat for Bush in November.

Bush's hopes for recovery rest on his ability to make Jews forget an ill-advised remark he made a year ago at a nationally televised press conference. He demanded that Congress delay for four months consideration of the Israeli request for $10 billion in loan guarantees, and called Jewish activists, who had flown in from all over the country to talk to lawmakers about the guarantees, "1,000 lobbyists on the Hill."

The new Bush was on display in a recent speech at the B'nai B'rith convention in Washington, where he apologized for his attack on Jewish lobbyists (he claimed that he'd been "misunderstood"), defended his record as strongly pro-Israel, pledged to send the $10 billion in loan guarantees to Capitol Hill for approval, and attacked Clinton for waffling on the Gulf war. Bush was politely applauded. Clinton, who spoke via satellite the following day, got a standing ovation.

Can Bush win back more of the Jewish vote? Stuart Eizenstat, a former Carter White House official and leader of the 2-year-old National Jewish Democratic Council, who is now advising the Clinton campaign, thinks the president will stay at 20 percent or less because of resentment over the loan guarantees, and because of his embrace of the Christian right and opposition to choice (Jews are significantly more supportive of abortion rights than other Americans). Israel isn't everything to American Jews: Reagan, widely seen as solidly pro-Israel, lost Jewish votes because he was perceived as too close to the Moral Majority. And the Democrats have warmed to Israel at a time when Bush remains relatively cool. "Now Jesse Jackson has no role," Eizenstat says. "The platform is pro-Israel, and there are no '88 problems"—a reference to the slew of pro-Palestinian resolutions passed at state Democratic conventions.

Some administration officials, like Vice President Quayle's chief of staff, William Kristol, think the Republican positions on abortion, family values, and school choice will likely increase support for Bush among Orthodox Jewish voters. But many of these voters, who are inclined to back Bush on domestic grounds, think he's anti-Israel because of his stand against settlements. And most Jewish doves, who support him on settlements, are committed liberals. Either way, Bush loses.

The opportunity to pick up support from Bush's Jewish defectors was not lost on Bill Clinton, who fashioned a Middle East policy out of protesting that Bush was mean to Israel. In a June speech to Democratic Jewish activists, Clinton attacked Bush, calling Bush's "callous remarks against the American Jewish community... an affront to the basic rights of all Americans to speak freely and to try to influence the political process."

Clinton recognized the importance of the Jewish vote early on. He recruited staffers and advisers from the "mainstream" American-Israel Public Affairs Committee and the more dovish Americans for Peace Now. Both AIPAC and APN signed off on the Mideast section in the platform, working with Samuel Berger, a top Clinton foreign policy aide. Mideast policy is fashioned by Eizenstat, Steven Spiegel of UCLA, and Michael Mandelbaum of the Council on Foreign Relations—working closely with Martin Indyk, the director of the AIPAC-originated and officially nonpartisan Washington Institute for Near East Policy. (Indyk also has close ties to senior Baker aide Dennis Ross.) Anthony Lake, the titular head of the Clinton foreign policy shop, signs off on the

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group's work. David Ifshin, now responsible for the effort to recruit neoconservatives to the Clinton banner, was for a spell both AIPAC's and the Clinton campaign's general counsel. The Clinton campaign has Jewish staff operations in Little Rock, New York, and Washington, a political and fund-raising operation in California, and get-out-the-vote efforts in major states.

Eizenstat says a significant shift of 10 percent to 20 percent of the Jewish vote from Bush to Clinton could make a difference in the key industrial states Bush must win, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Florida, and Maryland. Mark Melman, a Democratic pollster, says Jewish votes are concentrated in "critically important swing states." In Illinois, for instance, a 10 percent Jewish shift to Clinton would diminish Bush's statewide victory margin by a third, assuming 1988 turnout levels.

With Clinton surging in the polls, Jews have every reason to stay put—or, if they were among those who voted for Bush in '88, to gravitate back. Clinton not only has a strongly pro-Israel party platform committed to the peace process and the indivisibility of Jerusalem, but he is reaching out to party centrists and Reagan Democrats who've been fighting the party left over the past two decades, with diminishing success. Morris Amitay, a Washington lobbyist who formerly directed AIPAC, says he has a "comfort level" with Clinton he hasn't had with any Democratic candidate since Hubert Humphrey.

Bush campaign officials hoped the president would get a significant Jewish "bounce" from the meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the near-final deal on loan guarantees. Instead, Anti-Defamation League director Abe Foxman says that the Houston convention's lurch to the right on social and religious issues erased whatever credit Bush got from Jews during Rabin's visit.

Kristol thinks the convention did no harm. "Family values plays better than most people think, at least among a certain element," he says. "Those who react viscerally to talk about values wouldn't be with us in the first place." But to get their votes, Bush will need to do more than just campaign: some kind of breakthrough in Arab-Israel peace talks might fit the bill.

Bushies insist that Israel is more secure than ever. Iraq is crushed (or at least, no longer a viable power); Arab radicalism, already without a Soviet patron, was further humbled by Desert Storm; the U.N.'s Zionism-racism resolution was repealed; Ethiopian and Soviet Jews emigrated. Moreover, they say Clinton is surrounded by Carterites and McGovernites—like Lake and Warren Christopher—as well as congressional Democrats who have yet to get over their party's traditional allergy to the use of force abroad. But these arguments are making little headway. A big diplomatic triumph in the peace talks, or an inexpensive finish to the Iraq situation, could still help Bush, but right now the Jewish vote, like the election, is Clinton's to lose.

DAVID TWERSKY is the Washington bureau chief of *Forward*, a national Jewish weekly.

Another health-care absurdity.

MAMMOSCAM

By Judith Randal

If you watch T.V., you may have seen a commercial featuring a barely middle-aged woman examining her breasts in a mirror. "Mary Brodie won't feel the tiny lump in her breast for another two years," the voice-over proclaims. "But she'll discover it tomorrow after her first mammogram—thanks, in part, to a new x-ray film created by DuPont that makes it safer to start mammography early. . . "

Given the ad's public service announcement tone, one might think that no one quarrels with the American Cancer Society view that women aged 40-49 should have mammograms every year or two. Not so. Lower radiation doses have made the tests safer, and mammograms may indeed detect lumps. But there is considerable disagreement over the American Cancer Society's views about early mammography (and those of the American College of Radiology and the National Cancer Institute). The American College of Surgeons was asked to endorse the Cancer Society's position but declined. And two eminent professional groups—the American College of Physicians and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an advisory panel to the Department of Health and Human Services—openly oppose it.

The truth is that the value of mammography, which has been clearly shown for older women, has not been demonstrated for younger women. These groups advise women to delay having mammograms until they are 50 unless they already have had breast cancer or have a mother or sister who has. Indeed, they point out that unless their relatives were stricken before 50, even women from breast cancer families are often at no higher risk than anyone else until their 40s are behind them. As for those women under 50 who do get breast cancer, controlled studies have found that in many cases early detection and treatment does not improve the prognosis.

Why, then, do the American Cancer Society and other health organizations continue to promote mammograms for younger women—especially given their high cost? (In 1990 5.5 million women under the age of 50 spent, by conservative estimates, approximately $550 million on the test.) Partly it's a triumph of hope over experience, an attempt to save lives by promoting early testing. As an advocacy group, the American Cancer Society looks only to the potential benefits, no matter how remote, not the costs. But there is another reason: Each year, $2 billion is spent on mammograms. Simply put, mammography clinics and radiologists stand to benefit if

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increasing numbers of younger women believe that early and frequent mammograms may save their lives.

Part of the problem is a misunderstanding of the familiar Cancer Society statistic that breast cancer is the fate of one in nine women. Many women don't realize that this risk is spread over a lifetime and that it rises with age. The average woman's chances of contracting breast cancer in her 40s have been computed by Dr. David Eddy of Duke University Medical School. They are 128 in 10,000, which works out to about one-eighth of 1 percent in any year of that decade.

The odds climb at 50 and more steeply after 60, but don't reach one in nine until a woman is 85. And even that figure has been questioned by an American Cancer Society adviser. Dr. I. Craig Henderson, professor of medicine at the University of California–San Francisco, recently took a close look at the data behind it. "It's the Cancer Society's own data," he says. "But if you analyze it you find that an average woman's chances of getting breast cancer are one in nine only if she lives to be 110."

And mammography itself is fallible. According to Lou Fintor, a National Cancer Institute biostatistician, it misses about 10 percent of breast cancers (so-called false negatives) and has a false positive rate of 60 percent to 70 percent, meaning that areas that appear suspect on the film turn out to be benign. Both types of error are more common in younger than older women because younger breasts are denser, making the films murkier and harder to read.

But the acid test of mammography is its impact on breast cancer death. Controlled trials, which typically run four or five years, are the gold standard here. They have shown that when the women screened are over 50, breast cancer mortality falls by 20 percent to 40 percent. In only one of them—conducted in the 1960s by the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York and usually called the HIP trial—has there been a suggestion of benefit for younger screenees. And this too is arguable.

The first analysis of the data found that in the decade after the trial ended, there was no significant difference in the number of deaths among women who had and had not been screened. In 1988 the National Cancer Institute reinterpreted the data and found a 24 percent survival advantage for the screened group. But Dr. John Bailar, a statistical consultant to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, has called the claim "seriously biased." And Dr. John Lawrence of the Rockefeller Foundation, a former chairman of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, says, "When you look at the data on women who enrolled in the HIP trial in their 40s, you see that most who appear to have profited from screening were closer to 50 than 40 at the time they started, and that their tumors were detected not while they were still in their 40s, but when they were in their 50s. The clear implication is that the results would have been the same if they had waited until 50 to start mammography."

Some breast cancers, to be sure, were found in the HIP women under 50. But according to Dr. Robert McClelland, professor of radiology at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, three times as many of these tumors—about 60 percent—were found just by the annual hands-on doctors' examinations of their breasts as were detected only by the x-rays. (Contrary to what the DuPont commercial would have women believe, fingers can sometimes find lumps that mammograms miss.) McClelland says, "In this study, at least, mammography didn't do a particularly good job for this [under-50]age group."

Meanwhile, a study done with newer technology has been following 50,472 women in Canada who were 40-49 in the years 1980-'85. Half had annual mammograms and physical examinations, and half served as "controls," undergoing only a single hands-on breast exam. (Testing ended in 1988; screenees who entered the trial before 1984 had five dual examinations, and those entering later had four.)

Dr. Anthony Miller, the University of Toronto physician-epidemiologist who heads the study, has reported in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* that no fewer of the women who were screened than unscreened have died of breast cancer. He and the study's associate director, Dr. Cornelia Baines, will say little more until November, when the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* will publish their findings.

In the meantime, advocates of early screening, led by the American College of Radiology, have struck preemptively. Some of its members were consultants to the project and have told the press that, although the mammography improved as the trial went on, 40 percent to 50 percent of it was flawed. Miller and Baines have refrained from pointing out that many radiologists have a financial stake in the promotion of early mammography, but insist that only 5 percent of the mammograms were substandard. No matter who is right, it is disturbing that in several trials—including this one—more women screened in their 40s have died of breast cancer than have women of the same age in the control groups. Although the number of deaths is not statistically significant—meaning it may have been a fluke—its recurrence seems reason enough for caution.

Caution, however, is unlikely. The United States now has 12,000 mammography units, three times as many as in 1986, and the number is growing. Because most charge patients who are under 65 considerably more than the $66.70 limit set by Medicare for examinations of the elderly and eligible disabled—and only every other year at that—many rely on the larger pool of able-bodied younger clients to survive. If they were to lose the screening market for 40-49-year-olds (indeed, some go out of their way to attract even younger women by not mentioning age in their ads), some would likely have to close.

But this is exactly the kind of choice that should be made at a time when health care costs are spinning out of control. It would also fulfill what is supposed to be the basic tenet of medicine: *primum non nocere*—first do no harm.

JUDITH RANDAL, a past president of the National Association of Science Writers, lives in Lovettsville, Virginia.

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Capital gains, again.

FINAL CUT

By Robert S. McIntyre

President Bush laid out his "new" economic agenda in Detroit a few weeks ago, and, lo and behold, its centerpiece is a big cut in the capital gains tax, the issue that has obsessed the administration since it took office. If you believe Bush's rhetoric, the decision by Ronald Reagan and Congress in the 1986 Tax Reform Act to treat capital gains like other income is the source of all our current economic woes. No matter that the economy grew 58 percent faster in the post-reform portion of the Gipper era than it did in the first six Reagan years, when supply-side, loophole-based economics held sway. The reason the economy turned sour after Bush's inauguration, he whines, is the lack of a capital gains break.

The notion that the health of our $6 trillion economy swings on $15 billion in capital gains taxes appears silly on its face. It also seems clear that Bush himself has little faith in such malarkey—that by continuing to fixate on capital gains he is merely throwing a bone to the far right. In fact, last March Congress sent the president a tax bill embodying virtually his entire 1992 "economic growth" program, including a capital gains tax cut. Bush immediately vetoed the bill, calling it "a tax increase," although it did not raise taxes overall and actually cut taxes for all but the best-off 1 percent. Bush obviously believes he's better off blaming Congress for its failure to pass his program than promoting a "growth package" he knows wouldn't work.

To Bush's displeasure, however, supply-side zealots recently adopted a bizarre strategy to try to force his hand. It turns out, they say, that previous attempts to obtain congressional approval for a capital gains tax cut were unknowingly superfluous—because Bush can cut the capital gains tax simply by executive fiat. Although this expansive view of presidential power was rejected by the Justice Department on September 3 as unconstitutional, the preposterous arguments that the right made in support of its claim show how desperate it has become, and (inadvertently) illustrate the bankruptcy of the economic program Bush feels forced to run on.

According to the supply-siders, the president has unilateral authority to declare that henceforth capital gains will no longer be computed by the difference between what assets are sold for and what they cost, as the Internal Revenue Code explicitly provides. Instead, they say, the president can mandate that profit be calculated by subtracting from the selling price the original cost adjusted for the increase in the consumer price index since the purchase date—commonly referred to as "indexing capital gains for inflation."

This August the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Taxpayers Union hired two former Reaganauts, Charles Cooper and Michael Carvin, to write a 90-page legal memo making their case (subsequently summarized by Cooper in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece). Now, to be sure, there are well-meaning people who suppose adjusting capital gains taxes for inflation to be a good idea. The legal question, however, is whether the president can bypass Congress and put indexing into effect on his own. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the answer is no.

As Messrs. Cooper and Carvin concede, sections 1001, 1011, and 1012 of the Internal Revenue Code boil down to this: in general, "gain from the sale or disposition of property shall be the excess of the amount realized therefrom over . . . the cost of such property." But, intone the lawyers, "Congress has never defined cost," and "the term 'cost' is ambiguous."

Really? My dictionary (and theirs) defines "cost" as "the price paid to acquire, produce, accomplish, or maintain anything." Congress never bothered to improve on this because "cost" is as plain a term as one finds in the English language, not to mention the Internal Revenue Code. In fact, "cost" has meant purchase price (not purchase price plus inflation) since the inception of the income tax. Or at least it meant that, Cooper and Carvin acknowledge, as long as the tax code provided a big tax break for capital gains—as it did from 1921 to 1986.

Six years ago, however, the 1986 Tax Reform Act repealed the capital gains exclusion. Congress said the new low rates "eliminated" any need for a capital gains preference and that the loophole was ill-advised for other reasons as well, including complexity and the many tax shelters it had caused. But by closing the capital gains loophole, contend the lawyers, Congress implicitly gave the president and his Treasury Department the authority to restore it—by redefining "cost" to mean "cost adjusted for inflation." Huh? As a Justice Department official told *The Wall Street Journal*, rejecting this reasoning "was not a difficult call."

One wonders whether the Chamber of Commerce and the other "conservatives" also think Treasury bureaucrats have the inherent authority to wipe out a big chunk of mortgage (and other) interest deductions by regulation (by eliminating the "inflation component"). After all, section 163 of the tax code doesn't define "interest." Do they think that Treasury could issue a rule taxing borrowers if they pay off their loans in "deflated dollars"? They don't appear to have noticed that their argument would give Treasury as much power to raise taxes unilaterally as it would to cut them.

In fact, a key stumbling block to all schemes for indexing capital gains is the problem of dealing with debt. If people could take full, unindexed interest deductions,

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while earning partially tax-exempt profits on the invested loan proceeds, ventures that lose money before tax could produce fat after-tax profits. Tax-shelter abuses would be endless. Indeed, indexing gains would be even more pernicious than the old system of capital gains breaks, because indexing generally offers its largest benefits to short-term investments.

Another problem with indexing is its considerable cost and the huge benefits it would provide to very high-income people. (The top income tax rate would have to be increased to 40 percent or more if indexing were adopted in order to avoid an immense windfall to the wealthy.) Of course, the supply-siders don't have a real plan to deal with these issues. Instead, they merely trot out their usual claim that cutting taxes on the rich will raise rather than lose money for the government.

To provide an economic appendix to their wacky legal brief, the Chamber of Commerce and the National Taxpayers Union turned to the husband-and-wife consulting team of Gary and Aldona Robbins, who are favorites of the far right because they can be expected to predict that virtually any cut in federal taxes will cause the economy to boom. The Robbinses obliged with a set of fatuously precise estimates. By the year 2000, indexing capital gains would add $323.4 billion to the annual gross domestic product, produce 938,000 new jobs, and augment the nation's capital stock by a staggering $2,653.4 billion. They also found that the tax cut would boost government revenues in the year 2000 by $76.7 billion. Wow!

All you need to know about the Robbinses, who helped President Reagan unbalance the federal budget when they worked at the Treasury, is contained in the following summary of their remarks at a 1991 forum (from *Tax Notes*, April 22, 1991):

"Based on results from the Robbins' general equilibrium model, Aldona maintained that [a proposed $50 billion tax cut] would increase GNP ... by $226 billion, and employment would grow by 650,000 additional jobs.... However, Gary Robbins admitted that their economic model would show an even larger growth effect if all taxes were permanently and totally abolished and the U.S. was simply funded by pure debt. The unusual feature raised a few eyebrows in the audience."

The truth is that the performance of the economy after capital gains tax cuts has historically been so dismal that it's hard to find a reputable economist willing to defend the idea—whatever the fee. Indeed, an analysis by House Budget Committee economist Joseph Minarik, recently reported in *Business Week*, notes that both business investment and national savings declined markedly after the capital gains cuts of 1978 and 1981, while the opposite occurred following the capital gains tax increases of 1976 and 1986. The same holds true for employment levels and overall economic growth.

For George Bush, the problem is that he can't face up to the ineffectiveness of supply-sidism without antagonizing the far right's true believers. And because of that, it seems his administration, and the U.S. economy, will remain in deep voodoo as long as he remains in office.

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE is director of Citizens for Tax Justice.

George Bush's many versions.

WAR STORY

By Sidney Blumenthal

Since the first day of the Republican convention there has been no issue emphasized more by the Republicans than Bill Clinton's draft record. "When Bill Clinton's turn came in Vietnam, he sat up in a dormitory in Oxford, England, and figured out how to dodge the draft," railed Patrick Buchanan. Stepping onto the Houston stage three nights later, George Bush described his decision to enlist: "I was scared, but I was willing. I was young, but I was ready. I had barely lived when I began to watch men die." Thus he laid out his ultimate credential for presidential leadership. Implicitly, Bush conflated his war and Clinton's in a rough moral equivalence—to Clinton's apparent disadvantage. Then Dan Quayle and a host of surrogates suggested it was not Vietnam that was relevant, but Clinton's discrepant stories. From August 25 to September 21 the Bush-Quayle campaign fired off eighteen press releases attacking Clinton on the draft.

But Bush's insistence on the subject reveals at least as much about him as it may about Clinton. It establishes, to begin with, how important it is to his idea of manhood. When he was labeled a "wimp" during the last campaign, Bush instinctively called up his military service in his defense: "Nobody on our carrier when I landed there in the water with four depth charges in my plane or after I got back to the ship after being dropped down said, 'Hey, you wimp, I want to talk to you about something,' " he related on "Larry King Live" on October 12, 1987. But the issue also points to something else—deeply troubling feelings from his past that Bush has wished to submerge for five decades.

George Bush was a 17-year-old student at Phillips Academy in Andover when Pearl Harbor was bombed. He wanted to join the military at once. Secretary of War Henry Stimson, the president of the prep school's board of trustees and a friend of Prescott Bush, delivered a speech to the students urging them to remain in school. George's parents and teachers persuaded him to graduate, but immediately afterward he enlisted in the Naval Air Corps, becoming one of the youngest pilots. "I couldn't wait for my 18th birthday," he told *U.S. News &*

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Wolrd Report in 1987. He was trained to fly a new torpedo bomber, the Avenger, which was specially built to make emergency landings on water. Bush's base was the *San Jacinto* aircraft carrier, from where he made many runs. Indeed, his plane was hit once, and he made a successful water landing. The Avenger proved itself seaworthy enough for the three crew members to paddle in a raft to a rescuing destroyer, singing "Over the Bounding Main."

On September 2, 1944—the day Bush experienced what he has called "the most dramatic individual moment of my life"—he flew off the *San Jacinto* in a squadron attack on a Japanese radio installation on Chichi Jima island. While approaching the target, his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire. What followed is subject to disputed accounts and may never be truly known. Yet, over time, it has become the center of Bush's political legend as the hero-pilot, a commander in chief in whom we trust. According to the intelligence report approved sometime later by the squadron leader (it was oddly undated), Bush's plane was enveloped in "smoke and flames," and "Bush and one other person were seen to bail out.... Bush's chute opened and he landed safely in water.... The chute of the other person ... who bailed out did not open." The plane crashed into the sea and sank. Both John Delaney and Ted White were reported missing in action, presumed dead. The report added a cautionary note: "Bush has not yet been returned to squadron by rescue sub, so this information is incomplete."

The confidential log of the USS *Finback*, the sub that picked up Bush, recorded on the day of the incident that at 11:56 a.m. Bush "stated that he failed to see his crew's parachutes and believed they had jumped when plane was still over Chichi Jima, or they had gone down with plane." At 4:20 that afternoon, the *Finback* picked up another downed pilot, James Beckman, who, according to the log, "stated that it was known that only one man had parachuted from Bush's plane"—namely Bush. The log concluded: "This decided us to discontinue any further search of that area...."

Bush spent eight weeks on the submarine before being reunited with his squadron. Back in the Ready Room on the *San Jacinto*, he sought out Chester Mierzejewski, who had been the tail gunner on the plane just ahead of Bush's when it had been hit—the man with the clearest view, only 100 feet away. Mierzejewski had been particularly close to Delaney. And Bush seemed to want to answer the agonizing unasked questions: Why didn't he make a water landing? Why was he the only one to jump? Did he panic? "Look," Mierzejewski told me Bush said to him, "I'm sure the two of them in the back were dead. I called them three times and got no answer." (Given the construction of the Avenger, it was impossible for the pilot, shielded by an armor plate, to see the crew; the only communication would have been by radio.)

Bush was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his action at Chichi Jima, but he evidently was filled with the remorse of the survivor. "You mention in your letter that you would like to help me in some way," wrote Mary Jane Delaney, the sister of one of those killed. "There is a way, and that is to stop thinking you are in any way responsible for your plane accident and what has happened to your men." (The letter is published in *Flight of the Avenger: George Bush at War* by Joe Hyams.) "I try to think about it as little as possible, yet I cannot get the thought of those two out of my mind," Bush wrote to his parents—a letter he cites in his autobiography, *Looking Forward*. Whether responsible or not for what befell his companions, he felt—admirably—responsible.

In 1980, campaigning for president, Bush spotted Mierzejewski, who was about to retire as a foreman from the Pratt and Whitney aircraft plant, at a rally in Meriden, Connecticut. "I'm glad to see him," said Bush, calling attention to his old war buddy from the podium, according to an article in the *Meriden Record-Journal*. "Those were heroic times." In December 1987 Mierzejewski settled down in his living room to watch Bush, running again, be interviewed by David Frost. He was startled to hear the presidential candidate retell his war story, the one about how the plane was "in smoke and the wings were burning"; and how, of the two crewmen, "one of them got out. I think the other was killed in the plane."

This was not what Bush had told Mierzejewski in the Ready Room. Bush had related that he had called them three times—and he insisted that before he deserted the cockpit he was convinced that the two men must have been dead. Now Bush was saying on national T.V. that one of the men got out. "I never saw anyone else coming out of the plane," Mierzejewski told me. "It seems he [Bush] was awfully anxious to open that parachute. But I couldn't guess if those guys were alive. If the people are possibly alive, [he was supposed to] try to make a water landing. But I'm not in his mind." Mierzejewski now thought that Bush had "told me" that the men were dead "as if he was justifying to me why he was bailing out himself." And why, he wondered, was Bush talking about smoke and fire? Mierzejewski had witnessed only a "puff of smoke" after Bush's plane had been hit—not billows of smoke and flames, certainly no smoke in the cockpit. Bush's latest account, he decided, was not right. So he wrote the vice president an anxious letter: "These recollections are entirely different from my recall of the incident.... I do not want to see your campaign hurt.... I do not intend to dispute you in public." But he received no reply.

Mierzejewski's neighbor, a lawyer to whom he had confided his story, contacted the *New York Post*, whose reporter in turn contacted Mierzejewski. On August 12, 1988, the first day of the GOP convention in New Orleans, the newspaper published a front-page story, THE DAY BUSH BAILED OUT, by Allan Wolper and Al Ellenberg, which laid out Mierzejewski's claims. Some of the other crewmen substantiated a number of his details, including that he had the best view. The article noted that Mierzejewski was upset that though he was interviewed by the officer who wrote the intelligence report, his account was not included in it.

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The Bush campaign responded to the story by circulating the intelligence report to the press. A spokesman called Mierzejewski's version "absurd." (None of the articles on the event observed that the intelligence report contradicted not only Mierzejewski's story but also the *Finback* log.) Then the coup de grâce was delivered by Michael Dukakis, who remarked: "I don't think that kind of thing has any place in the campaign." Bush's wish was his command. Never again during the presidential race was the story raised.

Yet, during the contest, Bush published two campaign autobiographies containing divergent accounts of his war experience. In *Looking Forward* (written with Victor Gold, a friend and adviser), Bush described telling Delaney and White to "bail out" and jumping himself. "I looked around for Delaney and White, but the only thing in sight was my parachute drifting away." This story seemed to square with what Bush had related on the *Finback* and to Mierzejewski. But in *Man of Integrity* (written with Doug Wead, Bush's liaison to the religious right), he presented a radically different version. "I thought I was a goner," Bush recounted here. "I looked back and saw that my rear gunner was out. He had been machine-gunned to death right where he was. So then I turned back over the water and we bailed out." But Delaney did not survive. "He was evidently cut to ribbons as he parachuted down. I was luckier."

In 1991 two books celebrated Bush's exploits as warrior-aviator, just as he was being celebrated as the victor in the Gulf war. Joe Hyams published *Flight of the Avenger* with "the cooperation of the president," which neglected to mention Mierzejewski and his story. Robert Stinnett, who had flown with Bush in his plane during the war as a Navy photographer, produced *George Bush: His World War II Years*, which attempted to refute Mierzejewski by citing four crew-member accounts, which disagreed with Mierzejewski's version, but did not quote the crew members reported in the *New York Post* who affirmed a number of Mierzejewski's particulars. Bush's story seemed intact.

World War II is Bush's notion of war—patriotic crusade, as it ought to be. And it was natural for him to invoke it repeatedly in the prelude to the Gulf war and to proclaim exultantly afterward that the country had "kicked the Vietnam syndrome." In his inaugural address, Bush said: "The final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory." But when Clinton stumbled over the wrinkles in his draft story, Bush was strapped into the Avenger again. His faltering campaign has tried to right itself by making the most of the comparison between the war hero and the war shirker. The lesson of Vietnam, during "campaign mode," is to be forgotten. In order to cast suspicion on Clinton's patriotism, Bush's political crew has drawn a sharp moral equivalence between World War II and Vietnam. By stressing Clinton's inconsistencies, they hope to foster a larger point about his inconstancy.

But Bush himself, for a full month after the GOP convention, was unable to bring himself to assault Clinton on the draft frontally. Perhaps Bush recalled how he felt about his own sons fighting in Vietnam. None of them, who sought to emulate him in other ways, followed his youthful example by volunteering for the struggle in Southeast Asia. And none of them was drafted and went to war. "I see no point in gaining victory by stacking up bodies," Representative George Bush remarked in November 1966. When Vietnam was Lyndon Johnson's war, it was not worth American blood. But when Richard Nixon was elected president, Bush, the stalwart Republican, ceased his public criticism. In 1971 he was appointed U.N. ambassador. Then came a family crisis. With the war still raging in 1972, Jeb Bush, who had pulled a low lottery number in the draft—number twenty-six—contemplated becoming a conscientious objector. According to Barbara Bush, as she recounted to UPI in 1984: "George said, 'Whatever you decide, I will do. I will back you 100 percent.'" But it never came to that: the draft for Vietnam ended one day before Jeb, who had already had his physical, might have been called.

Or perhaps it was also Bush's difficult memories of his own war that for a month prevented him from making the full lunge at Clinton. "I didn't come here to attack him," Bush demurred before the National Guard Association on September 15. At the last minute, his handlers had substituted him for Dan Quayle, stirring speculation that the president would brutally use the cudgels of the draft issue. His speech, though, wasn't really about Clinton, but about himself, and its underlying themes were guilt and responsibility. Bush read from a letter he received from a Gold Star mother whose son had died in a helicopter crash during the Gulf war: "I could be bitter with the military and God, but my son would never want me to." "No body, no body ever discovered," Bush said in a near-whisper—just as there were no bodies recovered off Chichi Jima. He choked up, almost crying.

But the strategy of Bush protecting his presidential dignity while his underlings sweated in the trenches was not working. Following the late Lee Atwater's maxim that the candidate must carry the negative attack himself for it to have full impact, on September 21 the president descended from the White House t[illegible] Limbaugh radio talk show. "I'm not tryin[illegible] have a different con[illegible] the country," Bush[illegible] diffident and accu[illegible] Clinton ought to le[illegible] then elaborate on[illegible] condemned the w[illegible] charge about Clir[illegible] but his campaign[illegible] pletely personaliz[illegible] Bush might be cr[illegible]

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ligence report say one thing and the *Finback* log another? And why have Bush's versions changed over time? Bush's experience in the Good War was more tortured and his accounts more tortuous than he now admits.

"I don't want to think about it," said Chester Mierzejewski. "I don't want to get involved politically." Still, he sees the attacks on Clinton as cynical in the light of what he has come to believe about the event of long ago. "I knew two guys who would be glad if George Bush had been a draft-dodger," he told me.

What we do know, in the end, is that terrible things happen in wartime; that the young Bush was consumed with doubt and pain; that the older Bush has presented a simple, unambiguous, but contradicting, story; and that he has directed his campaign to project onto Clinton's youthful grapplings with a very different war the harsh image of the evader. •

Why minorities treaties fail.

UNSAFE HAVEN

By Charles S. Maier

How should the United States respond when the end of repression in Eastern Europe brings with it the return of the repressed? The fury in Bosnia in particular has awakened interest in the so-called minorities treaties imposed upon the new and reconfigured states of Eastern Europe during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Might the United States and the European Community dust off these pacts, which were designed to protect the substantial minorities stranded across redrawn frontiers? Unfortunately, such treaties would likely prove as troublesome today as they were in the 1920s.

The agreements were designed to protect a limited right of self-determination at the local level against excesses at the national level. Self-determination had been the ideological keystone of the Western war effort, from Britain's declaration of war (which was allegedly to redress Germany's invasion of Belgium) through Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. It was a logical xtension of democratic imperatives to linguistic and ıic communities. Allow each people a democratic ıl existence, so Wilson believed, free from autoıires and confederated in a new international he causes of war would disappear.

ess of drafting new boundaries was dicethnography. It made allowances for ıl lines of defense, and the territo- nd it recognized that peoples ed. For centuries Germans had settled in Southeast Europe and along the Baltic; they had controlled much of what became western Poland, and they populated the Sudeten mountains of Bohemia and Moravia. Jews were densely settled in the former western Russian territories. The Bulgarian, Albanian, Serbian, and Greek mixture of Macedonia was so tangled that it lent its name to French and Italian fruit salads. The peace treaties did nestle more than 100 million inhabitants into newly organized states west of Russia and Ukraine, but they left some 25 million people (including about 5 million Jews) stranded among the new dominant nationalities.

Jewish delegations and Wilson himself raised the issue of Poland's Jews during the conference. What evolved was a guarantee of the rights of all minorities, including the former dominating nationalities, *Herrenvölker*, who were now vulnerable in new cross-border enclaves in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. By 1919 negotiators could build on three centuries of precedents for anchoring religious rights in multinational treaties. At Paris the drafters elaborated American proposals for a treaty with Poland, which then became the model for subsequent pacts. Czechoslovakia, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia signed similar agreements with the coalition of victors; in the case of former enemies Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Turkey (but not Germany), equivalent clauses were incorporated into peace treaties. When the three new independent Baltic states and Albania were admitted to the League of Nations, they were required to issue similar pledges. In 1932 Iraq became the last subscriber to such a commitment.

In theory these treaties were exemplary efforts to assure collective rights. As conditions of nationhood or enlarged borders, they required new nations to allow former Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians full citizenship or the option of emigrating with their property. National minorities, including the Jews (but not gypsies), were entitled to establish their own charitable, religious, and social organizations. They could use their own languages in the law courts; their communities were entitled to primary schooling in their own tongue and a fair share of public education funds.

But the countries to whom these treaties were presented complained bitterly. The president of the Polish delegation, the pianist Jan Paderewski, protested against international supervision and contested the status prescribed for the Jews. Replying for the Allies, Georges Clemenceau reminded Paderewski that his nation owed its resurrection to Allied sacrifices, pointed to earlier precedents, and curtly argued that the minority treaty incorporated no more than "the elementary rights which are secured in every civilized state." When Romanian Premier Ion Bratianu complained that since his country was not a creation of the peace conference the Allies had no right to impose a treaty, Wilson replied that since the Allies consented to double Romania's territory, they could demand adhesion. Even after the Romanians finally signed, they parried many of the clauses, much as they had evaded the obligation

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imposed by the Congress of Berlin forty years earlier to extend citizenship to their Jewish residents.

It was in their procedures for securing international guarantees that the treaties were both innovative and vulnerable. Any League of Nations member could bring a petition on behalf of a minority to the League Council (the interwar predecessor of the United Nations Security Council), which could investigate and recommend a remedy. Within a few years the League set up its own minorities commission, and a thicket of litigation grew around school and language issues, local government, citizenship options, and property rights. German landowners in Czechoslovakia complained that the compensation set for their estates in the national land reform program was confiscatory. Germans in Poland denounced Warsaw's effort to re-Polanize land holdings. In fact, nationalists in Germany began to exploit these grievances as a lever to pry apart the new states, an agitation that culminated with Munich. Hungarians in Slovakia argued that they were unfairly denied citizenship. Jews in Hungary protested the regime's *numerus clausus* at the universities; Lithuanians in Polish-annexed Vilna protested the closing of their national schools.

The tenacious resistance to complaints on the part of most signatories suggests it was virtually impossible to resolve ethnic conflict by international intervention. Balkan minority rights in the Macedonian region could not be guaranteed. And anti-Semitism may well have grown more virulent, since racist Poles, Hungarians, and Romanians resented protests against their time-honored patterns of discrimination. Still, had the depression not intervened and the Nazis not achieved successes for local nationalists to emulate, the treaties might gradually have transformed violent hatred into routine litigation. The problem was that the guarantors shied from enforcing the rights they had won on paper; in view of the Allies' reluctance to enforce such a central treaty stipulation as German disarmament, they were hardly likely to press the claims of Yiddish speakers in Lodz. By 1933 the Germans, who had never been required to sign a minorities pact, were embarking on a campaign against the Jews that would make the harassment further east seem amateur. A year later the Polish regime denounced its treaty. As authoritarian regimes spread through the region, the experiment died.

The most substantive protest raised by reluctant signatories concerned the League's selectiveness in applying its tenets. Why should only a few states be singled out as potential offenders? Why wasn't equal treatment of minorities stipulated as a universal obligation for League members? There was no chance that the United States under Wilson—or the white commonwealth nations—would have signed equivalent commitments. The president had little sympathy for African American grievances, and U.S. negotiators were not prepared to entertain any parallels between the status of blacks at home and that of Jews in Eastern Europe. Wilson and the other allies also rebuffed Japanese efforts to write a commitment to racial equality into the League Covenant.

The difficulty of enforcing minority rights under international auspices was precisely what led the Allies to prefer guarantees of individual rights in Europe after the Second World War. Despite difficulties of enforcement, the virtue of the human rights approach that prevailed from 1945 through the emancipation of Eastern Europe was its presumption of universal citizenship and civic participation. This accorded with the theoretical foundation of our own republic and provided the moral touchstone for American diplomacy in the postwar period. Since the 1970s the U.N. and the Helsinki powers have renewed their interest in guaranteeing community rights. Still, if the United States—either alone, or as part of an international coalition—decides to protect Bosnians or Kurds or others, the justification should be their vulnerability as individuals, even when they are targeted as a group.

The other problem with minority treaties is the difficulty in defining what exactly a minority is. What groups might claim protection? Ethnic, linguistic, and religious units? Racial minorities? Women? Which of them could dare be excluded without acrimonious debate at home? How far down the ladder of localism would the protection of minorities be extended? To the Albanians in Kosovo? To the Mohawk in Quebec? Would such rights encompass the right to secession, or would minorities be content with mere autonomy?

The international protection of collective entitlements seems to evoke more bickering than does the protection of individual rights. International opinion has constructed a sparse list of human rights that commands wide assent, at least among the democracies. But in the case of collective rights, economic discrimination (such as the Slovaks claim against the Czechs) often lies at the core of countervailing claims. Such accumulated inequalities are not easy to remedy and may not be fundamental enough to justify international intervention.

And the signators of the minorities treaties in 1919 had a point, after all, in resenting the selective imposition of the treaties. If there is to be an effort at renewing the commitment to human rights in international law, it cannot be one-sided: to require pledges from Serbia or Slovakia or South Africa or Israel, while exempting the United States and Europe, would court the same resistance as between the wars.

The quasi-tribal feelings that have encroached on American civic culture are part of a transnational trend. The same tides of fragmentation that have overwhelmed the Balkans and the old Soviet Union also lap at Western democracies. Navigating this turbulent current in national and international politics requires a balancing commitment to civic universalism. If Americans wish to construct a new framework of international principles, they must take care not to encourage the same centrifugal impulses that contribute to conflicts they find so appalling abroad.

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Republican Convention Revisited.

By Heaven Inspired

NORMAN MAILER

Once an agreeable Texas town, Houston had expanded so prodigiously since the Second World War that one could now think of it as a gargantuan humanoid in a special effects movie (after the humanoid has been dismembered by a magnum ray-gun wielded by Arnold Schwarzenegger). Modern Houston sprawls over the nappy carpet of Texas soil in shreds, bones, nerves, and holes, a charred skeleton with an eye retained here, and there a prosthetic hand still smoking.

The megacity is, of course, not burned out; rather it is not yet built. Except in parts. The parts are often called edge-cities, clusters of modern office buildings thirty or forty stories high with nothing much around them. Five miles away, like an amputated elbow of the humanoid, one can find another cluster of tall corporate structures in mirrored glass. Between one edge-city and another, there are, occasionally, funky streets of old cottages or middle-aged ranch houses to remind one of the more modest homeowner passions that once belonged to the West; often these streets come to an end by polluted creeks, or peter out on a country road that will cross a rail track to run eventually next to one or another elevated highway that races on into another edge-city. Thirty-six by thirty-eight miles in dimension, fourth largest urban center in the United States (never crowded except on superhighways), its pride is its absence of form. You can virtually find a nose on the hip bone, an ear on the navel, and all the eyes you would ever want in the blue-gray and gray-green mirrored walls of all those edge-city thirty-story glass phalluses with their corporate hubris pointing up into the muggy Texas sky. So it was a city fit for Republicans in August, since, like the GOP mind, it had never had any other sense of the whole than how to win elections.

This convention year, however, the Republicans could hardly take in what had happened to them. Under Reagan and Bush, they had, by their lights, produced gouts of great and phenomenal history, had ended the threat of nuclear war; now all too many Americans did not seem to care about such achievement, and lately they had been trashed by the Democrats. In consequence, they were as mad as a hive of bees just kicked over. Mary Matalin, the party press chief, had described the Democratic campaign as "lower than a snake's belly," an opening gun. "Those characters belong in the outhouse, not the White House" was but another of the shots fired at the first session of the convention as speaker after speaker with relatively minor credentials came fulminating to the podium.

It was an odd morning. The floor of a convention offers intensities of mood comparable to the stirring of a beast, but in these first hours, the animal looked too comatose to stir. It was an opportunity, therefore, to study the 2,000-plus delegates and 2,000-plus alternates at 10 a.m., hung over and/or depressed, their faces formed in the main (given much anal and oral rectitude) around the power to bite. Leading an honest hard-working responsible life, at work from 9 to 5 over the middle decades of one's life, can pinch the mouth into bitterness at the laziness and license of others. If one had been a convict up for parole, one would not be happy encountering these faces across the table. Imagination had long surrendered its ghost to principles, determined and predetermined principles.

On the other hand, who had ever said that parole board officers were ideally equipped to run the country? Republicans sitting in their orderly rows of folding chairs, the aisles considerably wider than the cramped turns on the floor of Madison Square Garden, the Astrodome ceiling much higher, the vast floor lavishly carpeted, were a sullen, slow-to-settle audience. They did not listen to the minor speakers—one rarely did unless he was from one's home state—but they applauded moderately on cue, and tried to contemplate the problems of the change that might be in the air. The only speaker to wake them up all morning was Alan Keyes, a dynamic black man running for the Senate in Maryland. The Democrats, he asserted, had brought the poor to a pass where they were "trapped in welfare slavery. It does what the old slavery never could. It kills the spirit." So Keyes received a standing ovation, but it was a lonely event in a congealed opening morning void of other excitement.

By the time of the evening session, however, the mood had altered completely. Two events had intervened. George Bush had come to town that afternoon, and earlier there had been a jam-packed meeting at a "God and Country" rally at the Sheraton Astrodome across the street from the convention arena. Inside, in the Sam Houston Ballroom of the Sheraton, a medium-sized hotel chamber with no significant decorations other than a very large American flag, a small stage, and a podium, a crowd of delegates, evangelists, and fundamentalist congregations estimated as high as 2,000 people were standing with a remarkable display of patience as various speakers came up to promise the appearance of other speakers, and singers performed, notably Pat Boone wearing a cream-colored suit. The air was celebratory—the executive director of the Christian Coalition told the crowd in the happiest tones: "Within the past hour, the Republican Party passed a pro-life, pro-family platform! We are here to celebrate a victory. The feminists threw everything they had at us, and they lost!"

The assembled were healthy-looking people in the main, with a tendency, given the augmentations of marriage, to put on weight, and a great many young fathers and mothers were holding infants in their arms, the parents cleanly dressed with domiciled haircuts, fresh-washed faces perspiring now, not a bad-looking group except for the intellectual torpor that weighed on the enthusiasm of the room. The assembled bore resemblance to those faces one sees among daytime T.V. audiences, the minds graceless, the eyes blank, the process of thought as slack-jawed as chewing gum before the complexity of things. If they were pro-life, and they were, it was because, whatever valid and sincere reasons were present, they were also being furnished with an intellectual *rock*. God—as the Republican platform they had participated in shaping now told them—was present in every pregnancy. "We believe the unborn child

NORMAN MAILER is the author most recently of *Harlot's Ghost* (Ballantine).

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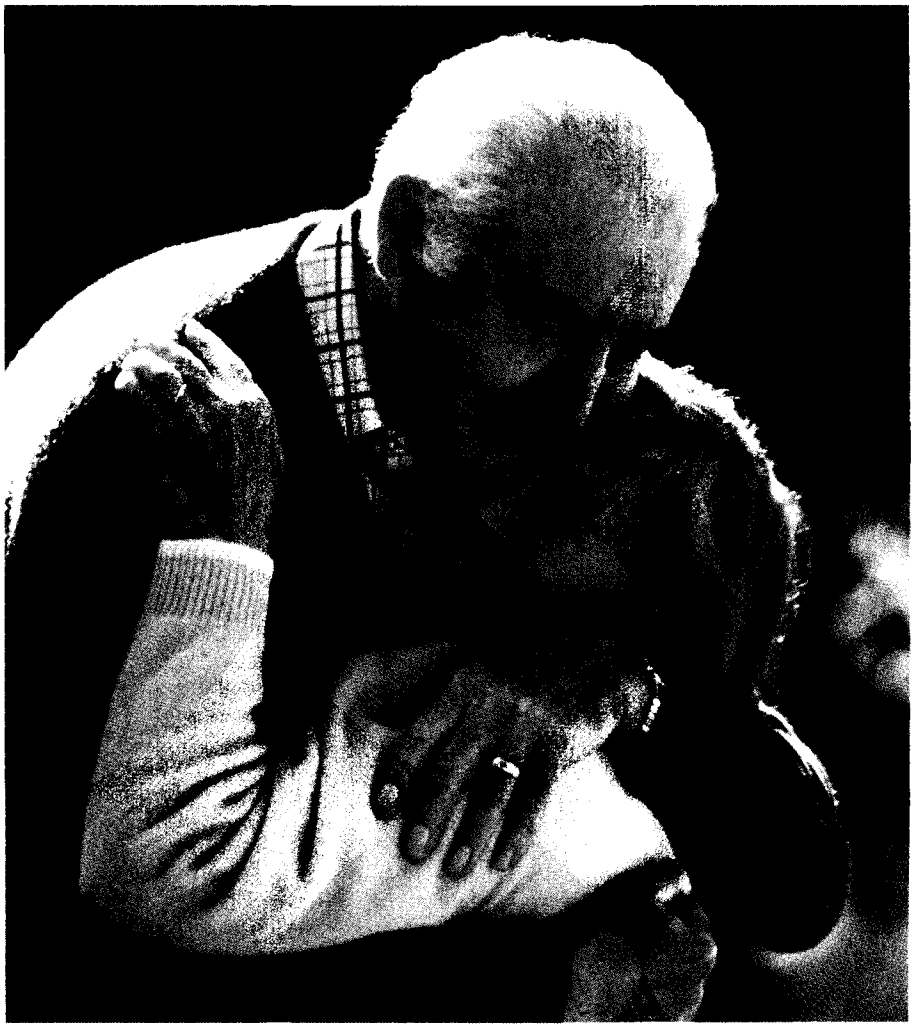

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has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We therefore reaffirm our support for a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children." Pregnancy was an aspect of God's will and every embryo was therefore a divine soul. A mighty certainty resided in this one notion, enough to make abortion illegal again; indeed, they called for a constitutional amendment to codify it as a crime of murder. The consequences, if carried to legal conclusion, could conceivably jail 1.5 million women a year (as well as hundreds of thousands of doctors, nurses, and midwives), since such was the number of abortions a year, but then the prohibitive logic of these numbers could never prevail against their *other* knowledge.

"I think," said Sylvia Hellman, a member of the Christian Coalition from Dallas, to David Von Drehle of *The Washington Post*, "that the media are actually good people who want to do good, but they go at it from the human perspective, not God's."

She was a lady who could still present a hint of lavender from that lost era before deodorant, dungarees, air conditioning, and parking-lot asphalt malls had come to America, and she added, "In the Bible, which conservative Christians take literally, there are rules to live by. Sometimes the rules demand that we do things that don't make sense to us, but we find out later they are best."

It would have taken a brutal turn of intellect to suggest to her faith that there were men and women who thought the devil might have as much purchase on the sexual act as God, and, if so, then many a young girl with an unwanted pregnancy might feel that she possessed a devil in her heart, or was it the devil she was bearing in her womb? By such livid light, the murder of an ogre within one might seem less unholy than encouraging such a presence to appear and deaden others in small measure daily by words and ugly deeds. The calculus of gestation is as much a moral labyrinth as the food chains of nature, but that is not a thought to propose to those who have found their piece of the eternal parchment. As Richard Bond, the Republican National Committee chairman (once George Bush's job), said to Maria Shriver, "We are America. These other people are not America."

Since nearly all 2,000 people in the Sam Houston Ballroom were obliged to stand, not only visibility was limited at the rear, but audibility as well. One could hardly hear the Reverend Pat Robertson, presidential candidate in the Republican primaries of 1988, as he introduced Dan Quayle, but some words were more distinct than others, and the vice president, despite the towering religiosity of the hundreds of heads between, was heard to say, "It is a pleasure to be with people who are the real America." No need to describe the cheers. "I don't care what the media say. I don't care what the critics say. I will never back down." He would repeat that sentiment several times in days to come, and was always clean-shaven as he said it. Dan Quayle might have his slips of tongue and occasional misalignment of facts or letters, but one could not conceive of him ever missing a single hair when he shaved.

"Well," Pat Robertson had remarked earlier, "this is a resurrection here today," and it is true that nearly all of God's minions had been on their feet and unable to move for close to two hours: that had proved more impressive than the rhetoric. Robertson was, by now, quietly celebrated among the liberal media for the appearance of a fund-raising letter in which he had declared that the feminist movement "encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians." He had a cherubic face, and he beamed forth a good, warm non-sexual Christian vitality with every smile and gesture. Perhaps he did not realize that his abusive language was calculated to drive feminists a little further into the precise roles he had catalogued.

George Bush arrived in Houston a little later and hastened to the American Spirit Pavilion, now the name for the born-again Astroarena, a ministadium and shopping center on one of the flanks of the Astrodome. There, before a crowd of 15,000 media, delegates, Astroarena mall-shoppers, and assorted guests, he laid into his problems with a squire's wrath. This was no longer the George Bush who vomited at a Japanese state dinner, or suffered a paucity of thyroid from Graves Disease, or was loved by Americans less than they loved his wife—not at all the George Bush who failed to knock out old Sad-damn, or had to patty-cake with the religious right and be bollixed by abortion and AIDS and have to listen to the interminable inner-party debates whether to deep-six Dan Quayle, certainly not the George Bush who was asked to solve the economy when none of his economists had a clue how to begin without getting into Democratic Party measures (such as more federal spending). Put it that he had one problem larger than all the others: the cold war was over. Could one begin to measure how much George Bush owed the cold war?

These were endemic concerns as worrisome (in the pit of nocturnal reflection) as the chronic concerns of any responsible householder in his late 60s. But George Bush was not the man to sink into the natural pessimism of his condition. He did stand up for one idea, after all, and it was named George Bush. Neither the spirit of wisdom nor of insight, he was the soul of Waspitude, one man of the gentry born to fight. He could hear the clash of armor when crusaders met Saracens; he had his own taproot into the universe of guts, a soldier's bowels, a knight of embattlement. Of all the misperceptions of the liberal media (and they were legion!), none was so unfounded as the still-prevailing notion that he was a wimp.

Problems passed, worries ceased. Combat was the medicine beneath all other prescriptions. If George Bush stood for one political idea other than himself, it was that America loved a fighter, and if you could maneuver the other elements, by whatever means (which did not preclude kicking your opposite number in the nuts), why, brother, the electorate would vote for the warrior every time.

So George Bush came to the podium of the American Spirit Pavilion, and in that auditorium, with 15,000 supporters there to listen and whoop, he started with the reinstallation of Dan Quayle.

It was part of his strategy. Perhaps it was the most honorable part. If every poll had shown that Quayle was a liability fast approaching the drag of a sea anchor, if most of George's advisers had all but begged him to take on a new dynamite vice president like Jack Kemp or Jim Baker or Cheney or Powell or Schwarzkopf, or even Bill Bennett if you had to keep your conservatives happy, Bush consulted his own psychology. All things being more or less equal, Americans not only loved a battler, but they adored a warrior faithful to his own troops. If he was to overcome the foe, how much more happiness he would find in victory, and how much more virtue (an indispensable companion was virtue) if he kept Quayle with him. The essence of noblesse oblige (which God knows you could not lose sight of no matter what other options had to be picked up) was to do it the hard way.

So he filled the sound of the word "Quayle" with whalebone.

> Four years ago, Dan Quayle and I teamed up and I told him then, speaking from some personal experience, that the job of vice president was a real character builder, and I was not exaggerating. But look, this guy stood there and in the face of those unfair critics he never wavered. And he simply told the truth and let the chips fall where they may. And he said we need families to stick together and fathers to stick around, and he is right.
>
> So when the establishment in Washington hears about this, they get all uptight about it, about him; they gripe about it—but folks

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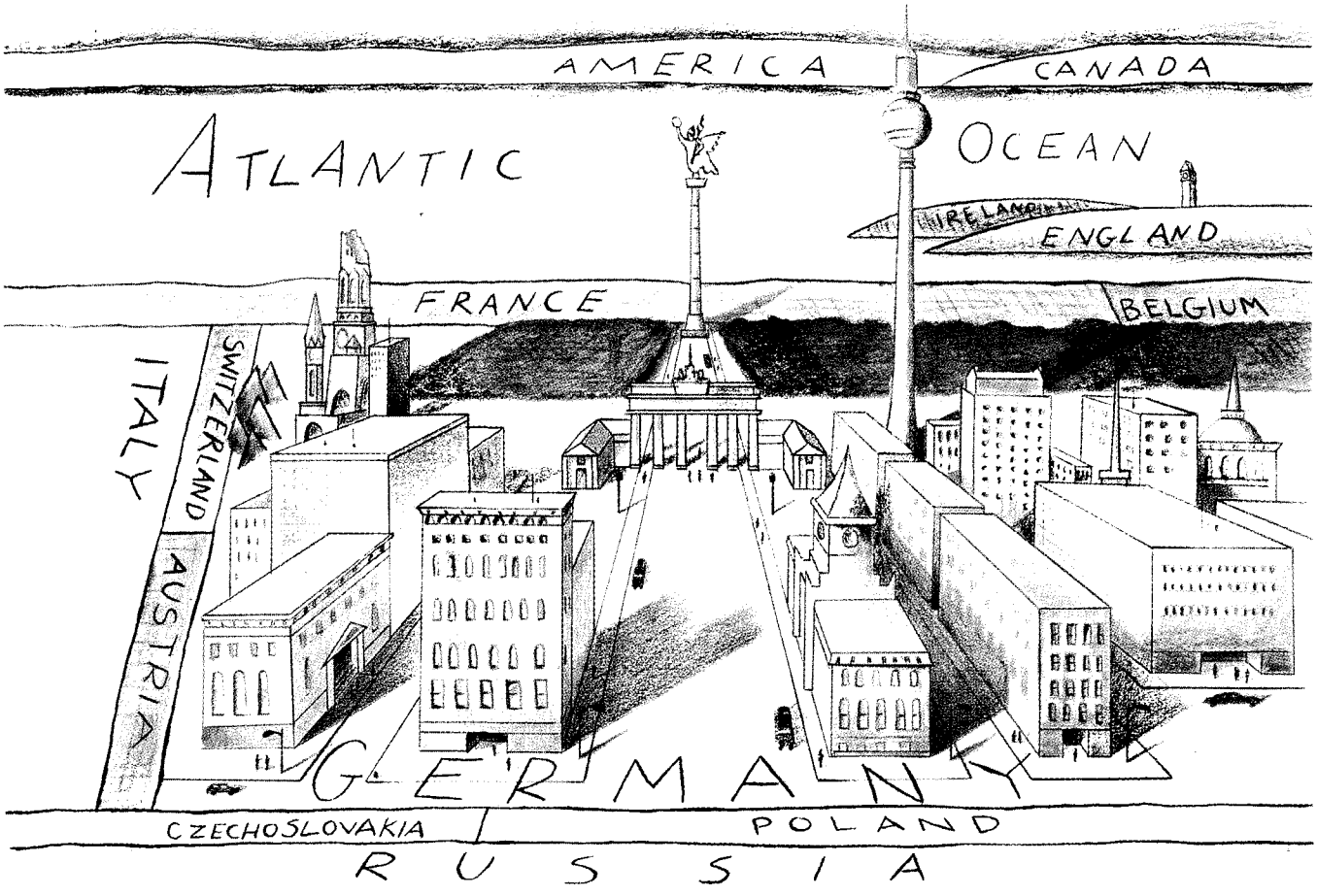

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in the real world understand, and they nod their head, and he has been a super vice president and he will be for another four years.

This was George right off the cuff, and his minutes at the podium turned into an event. The convention came to life. Our president was no longer wan, defensive, and intrinsically confined by abortion, health care, AIDS, drugs, and Sad-damn still alive, not to speak of the economy (that subtly nauseated off-beat stomach of the nation); no, this was the George who could win any battle against any Democratic foe any time because he knew the American people and what they cared about and what they laughed about. It was auto-intoxication for sure, but then mountains are climbed by just these will-to-win guys.

> I couldn't help but notice an interview my opponent gave to the *USA Today* last week. It was absolutely incredible.... He talked about how he's already planning his transition, figuring out who should be deputy assistant undersecretary in every Washington agency, ... and I half expected, when I went over to the Oval Office, to find him over there measuring the drapes. Well, let me say as the first shot out of the barrel, I have a message for him. Put those drapes on hold; it is going to be curtain time for that ticket. And I mean it.

Yes, curtains. The other guy played the saxophone, and everyone knows what that instrument is attempting to convey. It's just a blither-blather of illicit sex and farts.

> For nine months the other side has had a one-way conversation with the American people and now it's our turn—and they have called our great country a mockery and sounded the saxophone of change, and that sound sure sounds familiar. They say they want to shake up Washington, but they oppose limiting the terms of congressmen and that's a change, just changing the subject...

By evening, back in the Astrodome, the same delegates who had sat in despond all morning were ready for fun and more oratorical brimstone. The word was out. The president believed he could win. So the Astrodome was quick with laughter at each assault on Bill Clinton. "You know something," said Kay Bailey Henderson, state treasurer of Texas, a tall handsome lady with a humorous scorn in her voice reminiscent of Ann Richards, governor of Texas, as she spoke of Bill Clinton, "I think he *did* inhale." The delegates took vastly to that idea.

Then came Senator Alan K. Simpson from Wyoming, mean as rawhide, lantern-jawed as Popeye. His manner suggested the serious pleasure to be found in tapping into the jugular; the delegates confirmed his premise. Simpson would remind America that Clinton's only reason for not fleeing America while the war in Vietnam happened to be on was that he did not wish to lose his "political viability." Contumely rested in those two words. "How many other times," jeered Simpson, "did you sell your political soul to maintain your *political viability*?... How are you going to pay the bill, Bill?"

Then came the first large event on Monday night in the Astrodome—Pat Buchanan's speech. Trounced repeatedly in the Republican primaries by Bush, having to contend with the full weight of the Republican establishment in state after state, and succeeding nowhere after the early good showing in New Hampshire, Buchanan had managed nonetheless to amass 3 million votes. Half of them must have been as hard-core in their conservatism as Buchanan himself. Since he had also brought a heart attack on himself following such expenditures of energy, Buchanan could speak with the *gravitas* gained from reconnoitering early mortality.

Unlike the majority of speakers who strode up to the pale and massive podium of the Astrodome only to be overwhelmed by the caverns and hollows of volume in that huge and amplified space, he did not get into the trap of bellowing out his lines. Most speakers had a tendency to exercise hortatory rights—to yell louder as one lost more and more of one's audience. So they sounded cranky as their applause lines failed to elicit large response. All bad orations, whether by actors or politicians, have this in common: the speaker becomes exactly equal to his text—there is no human space between, no subtext to give resonance to the difference between the person and what he is saying.

Buchanan possessed a good deal of subtext. He was pleasant-faced and, in the beginning, mild-voiced, and no audience can fail to hang on every word of a killer speaker when he is pleasant-faced. So they took in each phrase and cheered with happiness at nearly every applause line. Patrick Buchanan was off to a fine start.

> Like many of you last month, I watched that giant masquerade ball at Madison Square Garden where 20,000 radicals and liberals came dressed up as moderates and centrists—in the greatest single exhibition of cross-dressing in American political history.

The convention was happy enough by now to reveal a curious side of itself. Conservatives might form the vitally motivated core, but these delegates were a far cry from the conservatives of 1964, who had been a group so openly hostile toward the media that after the first day, many a reporter did not venture out again onto the hate-filled floor of the Cow Palace in San Francisco.

Now, however, it was more like a T.V. game. The delegates booed references to the media with grins, not scowls. They were part of a T.V. audience, after all; you grin, you do not scowl. Besides, they were curious—these were real media people of the sort you can see asking questions on T.V. To be around them, therefore, was to be anointed into the other church, the new fold, television.

Indeed, not until Buchanan began to talk about Hillary Clinton did an ugly underside to his speech begin to emerge:

> Elect me, and you get two for the price of one, Mr. Clinton says of his lawyer-spouse. And what does Hillary believe? Well, Hillary believes that 12-year-olds should have a right to sue their parents, and she has compared marriage as an institution to slavery—and life on an Indian reservation.
>
> Well, speak for yourself, Hillary.

We can allow her to do that. In 1979 she wrote the article to which Buchanan was referring. Here is the passage:

> Decisions about motherhood and abortion, schooling, cosmetic surgery, treatment of venereal disease, or employment, and others [which] will significantly affect the child's future should not be made unilaterally by parents. Children should have a right to be permitted to decide their own future if they are competent.... In all but the most extreme cases, such questions should be resolved by the families, not the courts.... I prefer that intervention ... should be limited to decisions that could have long-term and possibly irreparable effects if they were not resolved.

Buchanan, having paused for the cheers he received, went on with the attack.

> George Bush was 17 when they bombed Pearl Harbor. He left his high school class, walked down to the recruiting office, and signed up to become the youngest fighter pilot in the Pacific War. And Mr. Clinton? When Bill Clinton's turn came in Vietnam, he sat up in a dormitory in Oxford, England, and figured out how to dodge the draft. Which of these two men has won the moral authority to call on Americans to put their lives at risk? I suggest, respectfully, it is the patriot and war hero, Navy Lt. J.G. George Herbert Walker Bush.

By his own scale of measure, Buchanan also lacked moral authority. He, too, had not served in the Armed Forces.[*] Nonetheless, Buchanan had inner sanction. He laid down a gauntlet:

> My friends, this election is about much more than who gets what. It is about what we believe, what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be—as was the cold war itself.

If he had kept to that, one could have

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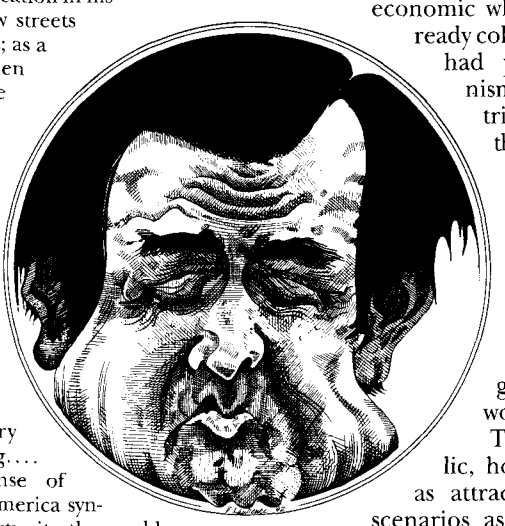
applauded him from across the cultural divide, for he had performed the obligatory task of the serious politician—he had defined the nature of the conflict. The fact that his voice had begun to wear down into a hoarse whisper made him only more effective in his peroration. Each of his words now seemed to insist on a private physical toll; so suffering, he spoke to a sentiment that no other politician of either party would have dared to come close to uttering in public.

> Friends, in these wonderful twenty-five weeks [of campaigning] the saddest days were the days of the bloody riot in L.A., worst in our history. But even out of that awful tragedy can come a message of hope.
>
> Hours after the violence ended I visited the Army compound in south L.A. where an officer of the 18th Cavalry that had come to rescue the city introduced me to two of his troopers. They could not have been 20 years old. He told them to recount their story.
>
> They had come into Los Angeles late on the second day; and they walked up a dark street where a mob had looted and burned every building but one, a convalescent home for the aged. The mob was heading in, to ransack and loot the apartments of the terrified old men and women. When the troopers arrived, M-16s at the ready, the mob threatened and cursed, but the mob retreated. It had met the one thing that could stop it: force, rooted in justice, backed by courage.
>
> Greater love than this no man hath than that he lay down his life for his friend. Here were 19-year-old boys ready to lay down their lives to stop a mob from molesting old people they did not even know. And as they took back the streets of Los Angeles block by block, so, we must take back our cities, and take back our culture, and take back our country.
>
> God bless you, and God bless America.

The public relations successes of Grenada and Panama must have emboldened Buchanan to believe that when it came down to it, Americans would concern themselves no more over the demolition of Harlem than with the disruption of any other Third World or Caribbean country. So, he was drawing his own line in the sand. If it took martial law, barbed wire, camps of detention, and Pentagon management of the media, then, by God, fellow Republicans, is that not a comfortable price to pay for walking carefree again on the street? The temptation would go deep for many an American. Would one care to see the results of a confidential poll on just this point? Inner-city unrest, however, would hardly be solved by his solution. For a religious man, Buchanan did not seem to comprehend that freedom which is obtained for a majority by amputating the rights of a minority leaves a slough of bad conscience, and so offers no more balance to heaven than to the streets.

Besides, his facts were off. The black and angry mob in South-Central Los Angeles had not been about to attack the old black folks' home; no, as the Associated Press reported it, the National Guard had been slow to arrive. Following Buchanan on Monday night would come Ronald Reagan. With a few cuts, his text could have been delivered by many a senior Democratic statesman (if, indeed, there are any left besides Jimmy Carter). It was as if Reagan was looking to attain the eminence that is above politics.

> In my life's journey over these past eight decades, I have seen the human race through a period of unparalleled tumult and triumph. I have seen the birth of communism and the death of communism. I have witnessed the bloody futility of two world wars, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. I have seen television grow from a parlor novelty to become the most powerful vehicle of communication in history. As a boy I saw streets filled with model-Ts; as a man I have met men who walked on the moon....
>
> Yet tonight is not a time to look backward. For while I take inspiration from the past, like most Americans I live for the future. So this evening, for just a few minutes, I hope you will let me talk about a country that is forever young.... This powerful sense of energy has made America synonymous for opportunity the world over. And after generations of struggle, America is the moral force that defeated communism and all those who would put the human soul itself into bondage.



So it went. He gave credit to the Republicans for ending the cold war; he chided the Democrats. "Our liberal friends," he called them. What got liberals most upset were "two simple words: Evil Empire."

Though Reagan's popularity was great in this hall, it was smaller outside. He had spoken of the "Evil Empire" too often, and now we were left with the bill. Part of the profound confusion that hung over the political atmosphere of America this election year is that we had gotten ourselves in so much debt under Ronald Reagan. If he had come into office promising to cut taxes, balance the budget, and beef up the military so that it could defeat the Evil Empire, the dire fact was that our debt had expanded from 1 trillion dollars in the time of Jimmy Carter to 4 trillion now (4 trillion, we can remind ourselves, is 4 million separate sums of 1 million dollars each); yes, the truth was he had spent it not to fight, but to bankrupt the Russians. We did not wage a holy war so much as a battle of U.S. versus Soviet military disbursements, and it had been needless. Once, under Stalin, the USSR had been a charnel house for human rights, but the monstrosities of the '50s had ebbed by the '70s into a dull and daily oppression, a moribund economy, a corrupt bureaucracy, a cynical leadership, and no capacity whatever, no matter how large the vastly inefficient Soviet armies, to succeed at world conquest. By 1980, when Ronald Reagan came to presidential office, the Evil Empire had been reduced to an immense Third World collection of backward nations incapable of defeating even one other Third World country like Afghanistan. So we had spent our trillions in the holy crusade of a Pentagon build-up against an enemy whose psychic and economic wherewithal was already collapsed within, and had pursued communism into little countries, and wrecked their jerry-built tropical economies even as we were wearing out what was left of the Soviets', but it all cost us twenty times more than it had to. Our grandchildren would pay the bill.

The American public, however, had been as attracted to Reagan's scenarios as he was. So our vision of an Evil Empire did not vanish altogether until the fall of communism itself. Then the fraud was out. Evil Empires, like dragons, slaughter millions in their last throes, but Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union went over to capitalism peacefully. Blood did not run in the streets. Caught in the middle of a long sleep, the American mind began to ask itself: Were we taken? Had there been, for a long time, something phony about the cold war? It might be that Ronald Reagan was the last person in America to realize that he had not won such a conflict, but had merely extended it.

With the conclusion of Reagan's speech, the first convention evening came to a close, and Bush's strategy could begin to be seen. In all of this long day with its double session, Clinton had been attacked scores of times, the nation had been celebrated, the Bush administration had been glorified, pro-life had been affirmed, and legal abortion denied. That conservative movement which had sought to get the government off the backs of the American people had now

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put its foot into the womb of the American woman. Yet, with all the rhetoric, not a new word, nor a new idea, had been brought forth on the economy. The overall strategy was clear. In court, if you have a weak case and can argue neither the facts nor the law, dedicate yourself to arousing the emotions of the jury.

If Clinton was going to base his campaign on improving the weak state of the economy, which certainly handed him the facts, then Bush would look to dig deep into the mother lode of American politics—patriotism. Since the Republicans had been mining such ore since the Second World War, the question was whether the vein had been played out. All the same, Bush could only try. What with his hardest campaign workers coming from the religious right, he could hardly debate in the center; his would have to be the war between the Patriots and the Bureaucratic Managers, between the warriors and the hedonists (read: faggots, feminists, lawyers, media).

In preparation, therefore, the president dropped in Tuesday morning at the Hamilton Middle School to observe a class of students who were giving a karate demonstration. In honor of the occasion, Chuck Norris, founder of "Kick Drugs out of America" and the martial arts virtuoso of numberless blood-drenched films, a quiet, gentle fellow, Chuck Norris—he could afford to be!—presented a white karate jacket and an honorary Black Belt to the president who in turn called Chuck a "point of light." One down, 999 to go!

That Tuesday night at the convention, Newt Gingrich, the House minority whip who had exposed the House Bank scandal (and had then been embarrassed by the number, twenty-two, of his own overdrawn checks) was up at the podium declaring that the Democrats were trying to sell America "a multicultural nihilistic hedonism that is inherently destructive of a healthy society." He had his backing. On cue, delegates were holding up placards that read, "If Hillary can't trust him, how can we?" and a marijuana leaf showed up on a poster with the caption, "Bill Clinton's smoking gun."

Nonetheless, the strategy worked but minimally on the second night. Jack Kemp spoke with reasonable effectiveness and Phil Gramm put his audience to sleep with the keynote speech. The theme for the third day, Wednesday, was Family Values, and it was introduced in the Republican Gala at noon. Four thousand wealthy Republicans, paying $1,000 each, came to lunch at the George Brown Convention Center in Downtown Houston (largest edge-city of them all), and in the huge main room, as large as a football field, and therefore commodious enough for 400 tables, the gentry of Texas and a few country clubs beyond had congregated in support of the president and first lady, who, after notables had been seated at the dais, entered the festivities in a mock railroad train called the American Eagle Express, a black and gold behemoth of a toy locomotive about the size of a large stagecoach. On the rear platform of the observation car it pulled were standing the Bushes and Quayles, and in their wake walked the Secret Service, as alert on this occasion as attack dogs. All considered, it was a hairy maneuver: the facsimile of a train choo-chooed and whistled gaily as it trundled through the aisles along the luncheon floor, but it left the president and his wife wholly exposed as they smiled and nodded and occasionally reached out to shake hands with friends on either side.

Standing near the locomotive as it crawled by, one had a fair look at Barbara Bush, who was immensely animated and appeared capable of taking in a formidable amount of information at once. Her eyes scanned every face within ten feet of her, and she did not miss a dear acquaintance or those who were at this hour somewhat less than friends, the smallest movements of her eyes and lips indicating a welcome across the gap, or a small reminder that things between were not altogether in order. To bestow warmth or display rectification in one's greetings suggests command of that spectrum of recognition that usually belongs to royals. On reflection, that was no surprise. Barbara Bush did not look like a first lady so much as like a woman who could be Queen of England, and that did little for George standing beside her, since his absolute trimness of figure, reminiscent of George VI, could also bring to mind King George's older brother, the former Prince of Wales, Edward, the old dear haunted poof who married Wallis Simpson, although George Bush, God knows, was no way a poof, but possessed the genuine steel (no matter how he might be cursed with that mild face and mild voice, and—said the Democrats—his mild brain!). Nonetheless, it was a moment to recall—Barbara Bush, as the Queen of America, or, better yet, our queen mother.

Entered the chow in chuck wagons, pushed along by teenagers in cowhand and cowgirl outfits, the boys leaning on the heavy wagons with all their strength, while the girls, obviously not liberated, were taking it easy. And the gathering of 4,000, whose least costly denominator when it came to dress was the Neiman-Marcus boutique, was delighted by such campy re-creation of chuck-wagon roots, but of course, as was true so often of Republican promises, the wagons were but symbols for the food to come; the real grub came out later, carried by other files of cowhands and cowgirls toting stacks of round plastic plates and plastic covers with fried chicken and fritters within.

After a series of short remarks offering thanksgiving to those who had brought off this $4 million fund-raiser, Dan Quayle got up to speak. It was interesting to see him in such a venue. Feeling himself among friends, he was relaxed and not unhumorous, much in contrast to his situation on Monday night at the Astrodome when he had sat in a guest box listening to Buchanan and Reagan while photographers never ceased clicking away. Under those circumstances, it had been possible to notice that a part of his unique appearance, always so off-putting in spite of his good looks, could be due to the fact that his head was strikingly small. He also looked wax-like, but indeed, under the circumstances, who would not? To be obliged to sit for ten or fifteen minutes, then another twenty minutes, and permit not one vague or errant expression to cross one's face on penalty of having it immortalized in the papers the next day, meant that he could neither smile nor groan sympathetically at what Buchanan or Reagan said, but had to content himself with a tasteful clapping of his hands for fear that any grin or grimace allowed to slip out would reveal some leering depth within. If he had not been the epitome of a rich man's son, or, in his case, grandson, a simulacrum for president of the wealthiest house on fraternity row, one could even have felt something like sympathy for him.

Bush came to the podium as a very large American flag was unrolled behind him, and he gave a short zippy set of remarks full of one-liners, "I think the train beats the bus," and "You're gonna love Barbara's speech tonight," or "I am proud and honored to have Dan Quayle on my side." He spoke of Clinton's drapes and George Bush's curtains for that minority who had not heard it before. He told the crowd that one out of two delegates at the Democratic convention was "on a government payroll." He also flattered his people:

> This is our last big convention, the last time—you might say—around the track. It is great to come back home to Texas, come home to where it really began for us in the political sense. The friends we made here and throughout our lives are the friends who are in this room—some from Texas, some elsewhere, every one of whom we owe a vote of gratitude to—friends who have stood by us when times are great and when times are tough. Now, we are about to embark on the fight of our life ... and one thing that is the most comfort is that through good times and bad, I have had you at my side.

There was a photographers' platform

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erected fifteen feet above the floor and 100 feet from the podium, and it was jammed with echelons of T.V. cameras, perhaps so many as forty or fifty; crowded in was a second host of still cameras. Out of this intensely compressed work force, a voice shouted, *"Bullshit!"*

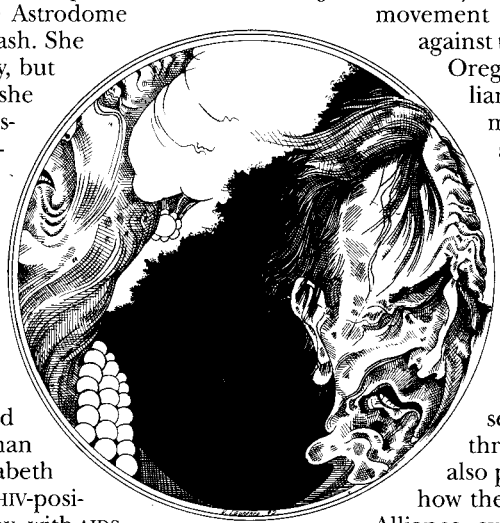
Later, the heckler was reported as saying, "What are you going to do about AIDS?" but that was later. The first muffled sound was "Bullshit," and everyone at the lunch froze for an instant as if everyone belonged again to one American family and was passing through the hour when Jack and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King had been killed, and Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford wounded and shot at. Like all families who put together a fragile composure after the death of someone who inhabited the center of the home and circle, it was as if the air went pale.

"*Bullshit,*" came another voice, "What are you going to do about AIDS?" and by then, security was up on the platform manhandling the malefactors, who proved to be two wan young men with the telltale pallor of the disease, their hair cut in a punk-rock clump, and sores on their faces; now they were hustled down the stairs from the photographers' platform and out the exit.

Bush picked up his discourse, but he was shaken—how could he not be? The moment one will be assassinated must become one of the hundred entrenched expectations in every public leader's life—unlike other crises, there is not much to prepare for; the angle of attack is never known. In the aftermath, Bush started to make a sour joke—with all else, he felt sour—"This is a crazy year when they can get credentials for this," he muttered, but other voices started up on the photographers' platform ("What are you going to do about AIDS?"), and now several of the new hecklers—second wave of the plan—waved condoms at the boutique crowd there for lunch, and security whammed and slammed the second group of hecklers down from the platform and out of the room, while Bush came up fast with a few figures on what his administration was spending on AIDS—one cannot be a major politician without having a statistics tape in one's head—and then he added, the room now feeling at last restored, "In my line of work lately, this seems normal.... If anyone else has anything they would like to say while we are all standing..."

He went on. He told his audience that he was working on his acceptance speech. "To be honest, I can tell you that I have a few butterflies ... but you can count on this. I look forward to this fight. I can feel it building in my blood."

It was the presence of AIDS that would build in the Astrodome that night, however, and not far from everyone's blood. Mary Fisher, a slim, blonde, and undeniably lovely young lady with a delicacy of feature and a poignancy of manner, proceeded to give the Republican address on AIDS not long after the prime time commenced. If a casting director had searched for a fine actress unlikely ever to have contact with the virus, he would have selected Mary Fisher if she had been an actress, but she was not. She was in a rare category, a Republican princess; her father, Max Fisher, 84 years old and reputedly worth hundreds of millions of dollars, had been a major fund-raiser for the party since the early days of Richard Nixon. Mary Fisher could speak of Georgette and Robert Mosbacher and Gerald and Betty Ford as her friends; indeed, the women were weeping and the men were wiping their eyes as she spoke. Before she was done, the Astrodome floor would be awash. She was not only lovely, but innocent, after all; she had caught the disease from her ex-husband before they separated. Now, presumably, she would die and have to say farewell to her sons Max and Zachary, 4 and 2.



The Democratic convention had heard from a man and a woman, Elizabeth Glaser, who was HIV-positive, and Bob Hattoy, with AIDS, and their speeches had similarly affected the Democrats' convention. There had been accusations that not enough had been done by the Bush administration to fight against AIDS, and Bill Clinton had declared that such a fight would be one of the central issues in his campaign.

Mary Fisher was the Republican answer, then, to Democrats, and she was effective beyond measure. Outside their gates, across the bordering street beyond the Astrodome, in a weed-filled vacant lot now named the Astrodomain and renamed Queer Village by the protesters themselves, there had been a riot on Monday night. A half-dozen arrests and a number of beatings had been handed out "professionally" by the police after a few of the 1,000 protesters had put up effigies of George Bush, set them afire, and then had begun smashing wooden police barricades to feast the fire. The police had charged in on horse and foot and a helicopter shook the sky overhead as chants of doggerel came up from the protesters. "150,000 dead," they began, "Off with George Bush's head!" and "Burn, baby, burn!" They cried to the effigy, "We're queer and we're here." One protester announced, "This shows how far we mean to take our anger," but then the anger was as bottomless as the rage that victims feel against hurricanes and earthquakes. "We're all innocent. Do you want to see me die?" had shouted one AIDS activist to Senator Alfonse D'Amato in a Houston church when D'Amato made the mistake of remarking on the tragedy of AIDS when it took the lives of innocent children. "What about us?" someone shouted back. "We're also innocent and we're going to die."

Well, they were innocent or they were guilty. It was the intolerable and unspoken question at the heart of AIDS. Many a Republican was harboring ugly thoughts. AIDS, went the whisper, stood for Anal Injection—Dirty Sex! Out in Oregon a movement was commencing against the gay nation. The Oregon Citizens' Alliance had sent out mass mailings that said, "Homosexual men on average ingest the fecal material of twenty-three different men per year," which, if a particularly roto-rooter way of stating that the average homosexual had twenty-three lovers a year, also posed the riddle of how the Oregon Citizens' Alliance ever obtained their statistic. But the anxiety of homosexuals, borne in private for who knows how many centuries, was now inflamed by the enigma of nature. Was excrement a side-product of nature, offensive to some, as the Democrats would doubtless have argued, or was Satan in everyone's shit? Which, in turn, was a way of saying that the devil was present more often in homosexual than in heterosexual encounters—exactly the question that blazed in the divide. We are dying, said the victims of AIDS, and you have no mercy. Are you cold to our pain because we are the devil's spawn?—beware, then, for we will haunt you. That was the question. Was the gay nation guilty or innocent, victims or devils, damned by Jehovah or to be comforted by Christ? Were such acts shameful or natural? The wheel of obsessive and unanswerable questions went round and round, and gay rage came up from the bottomless funnels of the vortex. Was their illness for cause in a world of immutable principles? Or was it the absurdity of a badly designed natural system that had not provided for safe sex short of the damnable deadhead odor of a condom?

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What had happened to American politics? Like Mr. Magoo, it teetered on the lip of ultimate peril—which is to say ultimate questions—and all the while a blood rage had been building in the nation. "If I am young and dying of AIDS," went the credo that was forming, "then I might as well go down in flames." Yes, the riots were building, and the forces of the right, equally inflamed by the more and more vivid presence of the gay nation, were out to extirpate—so went the secret agenda—all human flesh that carried such a virus. Scenarios were germinating on the other side of that hill of time which is ten years away. Scenarios, we know, are rarely put into production by the cosmic forces who make the real films of our lives, but let us contemplate the Republicans in this pass—an enormous congregation of the conservative-minded, who can be enumerated as the greedy, the spiteful, the mean-spirited, in party congress with the sincere, the godly, the principled, and the tidy, all philosophically unsuited to contemplate the nightmare of a disease that is not amenable to medical science and may or may not have the deepest moral roots; yes, the Republicans were paralyzed before the obscene enigma of AIDS and so when Mary Fisher spoke like an angel that night, the floor was in tears, and conceivably the nation as well, for instead of the Evil Empire, so nicely manipulable by American might—we always held the aces—now we lived on the edge of uncontrollables we did not know how to stir against—drugs, crime, abortion, race, disease. How much, nearly half of the nation at least, must have longed for Buchananite solutions: how bewildered was each angry soul of the right that there was no retaking of the disease of AIDS block by city block.

Into this stew of choked passions and muffled fears (where a city was now defined as a place you would not enter until you knew where you would be able to park your car and ascend by elevator to your event), into this ongoing panic came Mary Fisher with a message so old that the coruscated souls of the Republicans, nine-tenths barnacled by now in greed and wealth, cant and bad conscience, fury and fear, began to weep in longing for the old memory of Christ kissing the feet of the poor. How contradictory are our conventions! At this one, the most moving message of the four days came from a Republican princess who had the Republicans bawling their hearts out at sentiments usually characterized by the L-word.

> Less than three months ago, at Platform Hearings in Salt Lake City, I asked the Republican Party to lift the shroud of silence which has been draped over the issue of HIV/AIDS. I have come tonight to bring our silence to an end.
>
> I bear a message of challenge, not self-congratulation. I want your attention, not your applause. I would never have asked to be HIV-positive. But I believe that in *all* things there is a purpose, and I stand before you and before the nation gladly.
>
> Tonight I represent an AIDS community whose members have been reluctantly drafted from every segment of American society. Though I am white and a mother, I am one with a black infant struggling with tubes in a Philadelphia hospital. Though I am female, and contracted this disease in marriage, and enjoy the warm support of my family, I am one with the lonely gay man sheltering a flickering candle from the cold wind of his family's rejection.... We may take refuge in our stereotypes but we cannot hide there long. Because HIV asks *only one thing* of those it attacks: Are you *human?* And this is the right question. *Are* you human? Because people with HIV have not entered some alien state of being. They are *human.*
>
> I want my children to know that their mother was not a victim. She was a messenger. I do not want them to think, as I once did, that courage is the absence of fear; I want them to know that courage is the strength to act wisely when most we are afraid...
>
> To my children I make this *pledge*: I will not give in, Zachary, because I draw my courage from you. Your silly giggle gives me hope.... And I will not rest, Max, until I have done all I can do to make your world safe. I will seek a place where intimacy is not a prelude to suffering.
>
> I will not hurry to leave you, my children, but when I do, I pray that you will not suffer shame on my account. To all within the sound of my voice, I appeal: Learn with me the lessons of history and of grace, so my children will not be afraid to say the word AIDS when I am gone. Then their children, and yours, may not need to whisper it at all. God bless the children, God bless us all—and good night.

Marilyn Quayle came next. Had the coordinators been wholly unready for the impact of Mary Fisher's speech and so had not foreseen what a powerful effect it would produce upon the mean-spirited not to be mean-spirited for a little while? Or did the convention organizers possess the wisdom to know that Marilyn Quayle was ready to appear at the podium after anyone—Gorbachev, St. Peter, Madonna—she would not be cowed by those who came before. She had, after all, the insularity of a duchess, an insensitivity to her surroundings so monumental that it was almost attractive—one of a kind!

So she gave her little speech with absolute composure, the only sign that not everyone in herself was right there at home and listening came from her logo—that is, her horsey smile—that peculiarly self-intoxicated stretch of lips and protrusion of teeth that came and went to a rhythm that had next to nothing to do with what she said. Her words might be pious, or reflective, or she might even attempt to be funny, "If only Murphy Brown could meet Major Dad—what a story," but then the smile would come, on the beat, off the beat; it was like the reflex learned in childhood to hold off tears when one is being scolded.

Her language, however, was always correct. When it came to being politically correct—as a Bush Republican, that is—who could approach her? Her speech was seamless, and her espousal of Republican womanhood could not be improved, nor injured; it was there, flat as Indiana. "Watching and helping my children as they grow into good and loving teenagers is a source of daily joy for me."

On the other hand, she was not a duchess for too little. She had a nasal voice that could drill into clay, and given her disconnected smile, she could have been the president of a garden society, bird-like for all her horsiness, elevated above dross, and spacey as a space station. Let us say farewell while listening to her encomiums to the royal couple:

> Because leadership has everything to do with character and unwavering commitment to principle, Dan and I have been deeply honored to serve these four years with President and Mrs. Bush. America loves Barbara Bush because she exemplified our ideal of a strong and generous woman, dedicated to her husband, her children, and her nation. She is a model for all generations, a woman I am proud to call a friend and our nation is proud to call first lady.

To say that the appearance of Barbara Bush at the podium was the second if not the first most important event of the convention is to miss the point. Barbara Bush was also the major gamble of the Bush strategy. The economy, no matter what quantities of pork barrel were going to be brought up from the hold to feed electoral mouths in September and October, was going to remain a problem antipathetic to solution. One might as well roll the dice then with Barbara Bush, and pump up the advantage the Republicans held in family values. It was certainly a gamble. If America reacted with the cry—jobs, not happy hearths—then the election could be lost. On the other hand, Barbara Bush was the only exceptional card they had to play, and one could find a logic to the bet—patriotism, the flag, and the family were, after all, the values taught in elementary schools (even if they were public schools), whereas politics only commenced (if it did) with high school civics. So, family values were gut-bets. Unless the economy got so bad that people had to vote with their minds, patriotism, the flag, and the family had a real chance to hit. George could take care of the patriotism, but Bar-

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bara could demolish every Clinton position when it came to family values, and you wouldn't even see the smoke. The beauty of it all was that she was also an ameliorative and corrective force. If the good ship GOP was tilted ten degrees further over to the right than it cared to be, with every attendant impediment to responsive steering, Barbara could ballast it back a little to the left. The pro-lifers had kept cutting too hellish a swath in Houston that week, blockading abortion clinics so violently that forty-one of their *religiosos* got arrested on Monday, and then were so bad in court that they called the judge, who was a mother and a Catholic named O'Neill, nothing less than "anti-Christ"—Jesus, it was enough to make you swear. Ultra-religious Americans were not paying heed to the effect on the electoral result. After Judge O'Neill ordered Operation Rescue to keep 100 feet away from Planned Parenthood clinics, one preacher even started praying for the judge to repent or she would "be stricken from the face of the earth." Somebody else left a stink bomb at Planned Parenthood. Besides, you couldn't have a crazy-looking father, holding his kid, scared frozen, by one hand, while he swings a seven-month fetus (still reeking of formaldehyde) with the other. Republican women were going to leave the party in droves. George understood female psychology. You don't allow something as ugly as a fetus to be waved in public—women do not like to advertise the disagreeableness of some personal and private functions. Dammit, the Party needed amelioration concerning pro-life.

Barbara could provide it. Barbara would provoke the religious right hardly at all because, after all, even they knew they needed her. Pat Robertson made a point of saying, "I can't believe the American people are so blind that they would want to replace Barbara Bush." Family values was the epoxy, then, to keep the party together, and Barbara could handle any press conference or podium assignment. Trust her every time. In with reporters from *The Boston Globe* and *The Washington Post* just a week ago, why, she blocked every thrust, and these were top-flight journalists, true hard-ons, *honed!*

BOSTON GLOBE: On abortion, I have to ask you something. Why is it so many of your friends think you are pro-choice?

BARBARA BUSH: I have no idea. I have no idea.

BOSTON GLOBE: Because you never expressed it to them? Never talked about it?

BARBARA BUSH: I've always felt that if I ran for President, George Bush would back me 100 percent. That's the best I can do. [So] we can't return to that. I've given my answer.

WASHINGTON POST: Well, I'm returning to it and I want you to tell me how the Republican Party which . . .

BARBARA BUSH: I don't know the answer.

WASHINGTON POST: . . . which wants less government in our lives . . .

BARBARA BUSH: I don't know the answer to your question and so, in all honesty, don't ask it. I don't know the answer to your question. Pro or con. I just don't want to get into abortion. I've had it with abortion.

She could front any confrontation. The day before she had said, "It's a personal choice. . . . The personal things should be left out of . . . platform and conventions." She had said that during a televised interview in a simple setting. The only picture in the room was on the end table next to her, and it was a framed photograph (signed, presumably) of Pope John Paul the Second. She could offer every indication to Republican women that she was their advocate for choice in the land, while reassuring the religious right by dint of her close respect for John Paul II—no champion of abortion was he!

Speak of presumption, let us leave these musings of George Bush to hack away at the matter on our own. Concerning abortion, Barbara Bush is leaving just the kind of mixed message that only a monarch can dare to send out. Mixed messages are the prerogative of kings and queens; they are supposed to represent the entirety of the populace.

That was just what she did in her speech on Family Values. It was no rhetorical gem. On the page, it read like one of those decaffeinated pieces of prose that used to blanket the old Reader's Digest, affirmative, highly simplified, and emotionally available to anyone whose I.Q. had managed to stay below 100. But the GOP, we can assume, was profoundly aware, along with Barbara Bush, that most of the electorate, was right there, right under that magic number.

Virtually at her commencement, she paid lip service to other orators: "There is something not quite right here . . . speeches by President Ronald Reagan, President Gerald Ford, Secretary Jack Kemp, Senator Phil Gramm, and . . . Barbara Bush?!" It was evident already that despite her protestations, she was an exceptionally good speaker, and this because of one exceptional and virtuous ability—she could address tens of thousands of people as if they were not more than two or three individuals sitting across from her on a couch. This faculty is available to few, and it suggests she had managed some exceptional transcendence—a woman once sensitive about her stocky build and much-lined face, her dumpy presence once so remarked in relation to Nancy Reagan, had undergone, now that she in turn had become first lady, so many rites of passage, that she was now possessed of a consummate ease in public. So she gave her audience in the Astrodome a satisfaction they had found nowhere else—a wholly comfortable, social, witty, and reigning queen in their midst; yes, Barbara Bush was politics in the deepest sense, even as is monarchy. Her confidence suggested that one thing at least was right in the world—herself! We vote for what looks right.

So the royal presence that the Reagans had imperfectly commenced, the Bushes had now developed. The presidency had become a monarchy. In place of landed estates or thousand-year-old families, we had endowed symbols—endowed by the psychic etching upon our values of our quick history and, intrinsic to us, our American entertainment. Our symbols and our heraldry were in our American West, our Cavalry, the Marines, the Air Corps, the spirit-of-the-fourth-quarter, Notre Dame, and the kind of family values that had come down to us from Queen Victoria and been brought over by boatloads of immigrants, a sense of propriety brought up to the mark now by Queen Mother Barbara, and our own not wholly overpowering King George, a fantasy of rich national theatre. However, since Mr. and Mrs. Bush partook of it as only WASP gentry and WASP vigor can settle into a set of roles they are able to spend their lives living out, but will never name, a subliminal nourishment was there for that part of America which could hardly survive without the certainty of a single powerful and uplifting idea, the unvoiced sense that Barbara Bush was, for all effects, our Queen and so could underwrite the religion beneath all other American religions—America itself. Well, thought the Republicans, we'll win by an avalanche if we can only keep the focus on Hillary versus Barbara, Hillary with her feminist intelligence and her hairband.

For the speech itself, little registers in the text unless we bring the emoluments of her presence to it. Speaking of her hus-

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band, she moved him safely out of harm's way with queenly dispatch:

> I always feel wonderful when I get to talk about the strongest, most decent, most caring, wisest, and yes ... handsomest man I have ever known ... George Bush. Now I am here to thank hundreds of communities across the country for one of the great privileges George and I have had in the last four years ... the chance to meet so many American families and to be in your homes. We have learned from you. And we look forward to meeting many more of you with four more years!
>
> We've met thousands of wonderful families, we include extended families ... we mean the neighbors ... even the community itself,

and gave the enumeration:

> Heroic simple mothers and fathers, and grandparents ... now raising their grandchildren ... we've visited literacy classes where courageous parents were learning to read ... we've held crack babies and babies with AIDS. ... George and I have seen communities gather around parents with a gravely ill child ... times in our lives when we, too, couldn't have made it without our neighbors ... shared moments with [Persian Gulf families] ... those yellow-ribboned towns not only wrapped trees and posts, they also wrapped their arms around their young families ... as in our family, as in American families everywhere, the parents we've met are determined to teach their children integrity, strength, responsibility, courage, sharing, love of God, and pride in being an American. However you define family, that's what we mean by family values.

The Republicans in the Astrodome were delirious. They could believe in victory for the first time. Clinton's lead was vanishing even as the first lady spoke. For there was depth to this gambit. It would appeal not only to all who were happy and fierce about their family, but one could probably add in a host of those loners bereft of family, plus the unhappy families that wished to be happy so much that their hearts tugged at the thought that it might still be possible. Family values was bound to exert a force on 75 percent of the vote—all the people who were in favor of Barbara.

> You may be exhausted from working a job ... or two jobs and taking care of your children, or you may have put your career on hold. Either way, you may wonder, as I did every now and then, am I really doing the right thing? ... Yes, you are ... from the bottom of my heart I'm here to tell you that you are doing the right thing and God bless you for it.

Who would ever have believed there was any other side to her tonight? When the scandal about George had hit the fan just a week before the convention, and the media had been teeming with tales, not quite nailed down, of George and Jennifer Fitzgerald, Barbara Bush had called the reports "deceitful," "harmful," "mean," "ugly." That was to the media at large. To one interviewer, for whom she may have had a fond spot, she had laughed and said, "It's funny. Nobody ever asks if I've fooled around."

Who knew? With all the Republican candidates for '96, could she be wholly out of her mind if occasionally she had an errant thought or two about who might be added to the list? History, we know, has its own mordant sense of humor. Tonight, with seventeen children and grandchildren surrounding Barbara and George, the story about Woody Allen, Mia Farrow, and Soon-Yi was circulating happily among the Republicans. William Kristol, an able servant in the development of the Republican mind—he was Dan Quayle's chief of staff—was heard to remark at a press briefing, "I'm tempted to say Woody Allen is a good Democrat and leave it at that." Newt Gingrich looked to rake in the pot. "Woody Allen having non-incest with a non-daughter to whom he was a non-father because they were a non-family fits the Democratic platform perfectly."

William J. Bennett, the former secretary of education and the drug czar for the Bush Administration, was chosen to nominate Dan Quayle, a well thought-out selection since Bennett was reminiscent of Pat O'Brian in the movies of the '30s and '40s where he would play a tough priest. Bennett gave a quiet principled conservative speech and concluded with a dignified series of encomiums for Dan Quayle. He has succeeded, said Bennett,

> in sparking needed debate about our most important social issue: the values by which we live and which we convey to our children. He has stood for family values. He has stood up against his critics. He has been principled and courageous and in response he has been belittled, but he has not been silenced. Through it all, this good and decent man has demonstrated grace and resolve and resilience. He has earned our respect. And we should stand by our man.

On the following night, Thursday, last session of the convention, it was up to Dan Quayle to fit such specifications. No routine task. One would have needed the light forged by inner contests with one's rage and anguish, and Quayle, from the day he had been chosen by Bush in 1988, had been unable to take in one breath that was not predeterminedly partisan. Embattled, ridiculed, in liege to a wife who seemed twice as strong as he was and eight times more opinionated, he had had a full term of skirmishing with the media, and now, four years later, his petulance still leaked through. After a bow to the greatness of George Bush, he said:

> I know my critics wish I were not standing here tonight. They don't like our values. They look down on our beliefs. They're afraid of our ideas. And they know the American people stand on our side. That is why, when someone confronts them, they will stop at nothing to destroy him. To them I say: You have failed. I stand before you, and before the American people—unbowed, unbroken, and ready to keep fighting for our beliefs.

To this he added *extempore*: "I'll never surrender, never quit, never retreat" which was reminiscent of Churchill's speech after Dunkirk, but then, Churchill, quite as easily as Quayle, could have been seriously influenced in adolescence by Thomas Henley's *Invictus*. "Out of the night that covers me / black as the pit from pole to pole / I thank whatever gods may be / for my unconquerable soul."

Quayle might speak with defiance, but he still seemed not so much unfinished as uncommenced. "It is not just a difference between conservative and liberal," said Quayle, speaking with the sanctimoniousness that no politician in America seemed to have in greater supply, "It is a difference between fighting for what is right and refusing to see what is wrong." That is probably why he inspired such hostility in the media. A young, rich, good-looking man does well not to be pious—piety, we sense, is not convincing unless it is based on tragedy and dread. Even as he threw down the gauntlet, he lacked dimension, a mediocre actor reciting a line more powerful than the true register of his experience.

Besides, he lacked taste. He mashed tuna salad and blueberry muffins into the same picnic baggie:

> We have taught our children to respect single parents and their challenges—challenges that faced my grandmother many years ago and my own sister today. And we have taught our children about the tragedy of diseases like breast cancer—which took the life of Marilyn's mother. Marilyn and I have hosted an annual event called the Race for the Cure of Breast Cancer. Two months ago, 20,000 runners, men and women, young and old, joined us in the nation's capitol to race for the cure.

Let us give him credit, however, for the interesting point he did make. He was all for reforming the legal system. If he did not say how he would bring this about without government interference, he did, at least, point to one of the first of our economic ills.

> America has 5 percent of the world's population and 70 percent of the world's lawyers. I have nothing against lawyers—at least most of them. I'm a lawyer; I'm married to one. When we worked our way through night law school, Marilyn and I looked forward with pride to becoming part of the finest legal system in the world. But

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today our country has a problem: our legal system is costing consumers $300 billion a year. The litigation explosion has damaged our competitiveness; it has wiped out jobs; it has forced doctors to quit practicing in places where they are needed most. Every American knows the legal system is broken—and now is the time to fix it.

Yes, indeed, and would he lead the war against the non-productive costs put into our economic system by all the law firms that did corporate work?

Packed around the floor under the podium, cheering every phrase, placards pumping, voices chanting, and with a high tropism for the nearest television lens, the Republican Youth Delegate Program, also known as the Youth Group, had been powering it up so masterfully for Dan Quayle that if one had not seen them do as much for Pat Buchanan, Ronald Reagan, Jack Kemp, Phil Gramm, and Lynn Martin, the impression could have developed that Quayle's address to the convention had gotten him off to a good start for '96. The essence of successful prostitution, however, even when it is merely spiritual, is an exaggerated if temporary enthusiasm for the client, and the Youth Group had certainly done as much for each of the other speakers. Two hundred strong, picked for Republican balance in gender and ethnicity—a judicious spotting of black, Hispanic, and Asian faces—they were Republican high school and college students who would be future politicians, and so were up each day by 5 in the morning and did not pack their convention gear until after midnight, a special corps bused from rally to rally and event after event, there to give life to the T.V. crews outside and inside the Astrodome.

They certainly did their best for Quayle, and if one did not discern the drop in intensity as one moved further away from the podium, there would have been no way to explain the little economic fact that over in the Astroarena, down in the shopping center, Buchanan buttons were selling briskly, Kemp buttons modestly, and Quayle buttons were not moving at all. How severe are the findings of the competitive free market! By its stern laws and principles, the unsuccessful are equal to the undeserving. Quayle's buttons would be cast out on Friday.

Enter George Bush. Once again, as in 1988, he would have to give the speech of his life. Or so it was generally agreed. The feeling among Republicans was that Family Values had taken a full bite out of the Democrats' lead in the polls, and if George could deliver on this occasion, parity might be near.

Bush had fretted over the need to prove himself one more time. It was as if he could not overcome his resentment that he, the conqueror of the Persian Gulf, was still obliged to seek victory through oratorical splendor. Whatever his desires, he had ended as the focus of narrative interest for this four-day convention. Would he or would he not startle and encourage the nation with new ideas and new policies? Or, would he fail to?

Thursday morning at an ecumenical prayer breakfast, he had said, "Tonight, I give my acceptance speech—and if it catches fire, it may give a whole new meaning to the burning Bush." A humorous remark, but a vain hope. He was too angry within: the delegates were treated instead to the smoldering Bush. If Clinton had failed to deliver a great speech and took fifty-four minutes to prove it, the same sentence could now be employed for George Bush except that he ate up fifty-eight minutes.

On reflection, there was a difference in the nature of their journeyman gifts at the podium. Clinton had elucidated a number of points and programs, even if he had felt obliged to do it three times over; the president, having no new themes, provided 100 applause lines. In the beginning, response came quickly and frenetically, his audience steamed up to hysteria not only by the Youth Group, packed in whole compressions of young humanity under his nose at the podium, but from the delegates on the floor, superheated in the first minutes of this hour of climax, ergo George Bush had difficulties handling the din. His first estimated ten minutes must have consumed twenty. Nor was he simple and modestly appealing as he had been in '88 with Peggy Noonan's speech. Tonight, the text read like a committee production, and by the end, a quiet pall was on the Astrodome, not unreminiscent of Bill Clinton's last ten minutes at the Garden.

So it is pointless to do more than give a most restricted sampling of what he offered. He had, after all, said it before, and would say it again. His contribution to the problem of the economy was to tell again his tale of woe. Blame must fall on the head of Congress. The speech, like his ideas, was scattered in bits and pieces, a Broadway comedy which cashed laugh after laugh and left its audience muttering, "What an empty show!" The longer it went, the more one became aware that the center of narrative interest, the philosophical content, was the one protagonist that never appeared.

Here, then, is Bush's climactic speech presented in selected snippets that will prove less injurious to him than the complete text.

> This convention is the first at which an American president can say—the cold war is over, and freedom finished first .... I saw the chance to rid our children's dreams of the nuclear nightmare and I did ... when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.... What about the leader of the Arkansas National Guard—the man who hopes to be commander in chief? Well, while I bit the bullet, he bit his nails.... Sounds to me like his policy can be summed up by a road sign he's probably seen on his bus tour, "Slippery when Wet."... Who do you trust in this election? The candidate who raised taxes one time or the other candidate who raised taxes and fees 128 times, and enjoyed it every time?

Listening carefully in one of the VIP boxes above the floor was Jim Baker. Studying his expression, one could only decide that he was not the fellow to play poker with—by his expression you could not tell whether Baker was enthralled, appalled, or bored. As Bush went on, Baker proceeded to study the text of the speech with the concentration others might give to a musical score. Was he noting which lines produced more genuine response or less than he had anticipated?

> Now, I know Americans are tired of the blame game, tired of people in Washington acting like they are candidates for the next episode of American Gladiators. I don't like it either. Neither should you. But the truth is the truth. Our policies haven't failed; they haven't even been tried.

It was a long exercise in the use of the larynx to come from a man whose voice was 68 years old, and he was beginning to whine—indeed, the timbre of complaint was beginning to remind one of Quayle.

He was near the end, however. It was time to produce a new sound.

> I believe that America will always have a special place in God's heart, as long as He has a special place in ours. And maybe that's why I've always believed that patriotism is not just another point of view.... Tonight I appeal to that unyielding spirit.... Tonight I say to you—join me in our new crusade—to reap the rewards of our golden victory—to win the peace—so that we may make America safer and stronger....

The president could not help it that he felt contempt for the American people. They had been out-there and down-there for so long. There they were, that long way off, far from the numberless committee rooms where he had lived and mingled and made his purchase on history for two decades now.

The last 100,000 of a quarter-million balloons floated down with the conclusion of his speech, and golden confetti gave an effulgence as it fell, a heavenly light to outline the podium as the singer offered "God Bless America."

Yes, God bless us—we need it. If fascism comes from the rotting away of a nation's virtue until words like trust mean corrupt then yes, we are going to need it. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Clint and Gore

Clint Eastwood's **Unforgiven** (Warner Bros.), which he stars in and directed and produced, has been hailed as a masterpiece, worthy of comparison with Murnau, Mizoguchi, and of course Ford—plus the Book of Genesis. Belatedly but as firmly as possible, I dissent.

The West in the early 1880s. Eastwood plays Bill Munny, an ex-gunman who gave up criminal life ten years earlier, married, had two children, and now, his wife having died, raises the children and hogs single-handedly in Kansas. A young would-be gunny called the Schofield Kid rides by one day and invites Munny to come along to Wyoming and share in a $1,000 reward. This sum has been posted by whores (the film's operative term) in the town of Big Whiskey for anyone who kills the two local cowboys who slashed the face of one of the whores. (She had giggled at the diminutive pecker of one of the men.) At first Munny, though impoverished, declines. Then, to get cash for his children, he rounds up a former partner in crime, Ned Logan (Morgan Freeman), and they ride off with the Kid to kill the cowboys and split the reward three ways.

The marshal of Big Whiskey (Gene Hackman) has already punished the two cowboys, he thinks, by making them hand over some horses, and he means to make sure that no one comes to town to kill them and collect the reward. To this end, he whips the first arrival, a stylish Brit called English Bob (Richard Harris) and sends him packing. But by the end of this (intended) epic, Munny and his pals have earned the reward, though some other deaths cloud the triumph.

Best things first. The cast is uniformly excellent. Eastwood, now 62, in shape and gait more and more resembling the older Henry Fonda, gives us a distillation of all his previous gunmen, Western and modern. This summa of taciturn violence, now tinged with intimations of mortality, is strong, stark. Freeman is one of the most reassuring actors around: the moment we see him, we know the part is in good hands. Hackman pushes a bit, to rub some warmth into his legal tyrant (which, though mostly benevolent, he is), but he is at least Freeman's equal in reassurance. Harris isn't really asked for much and supplies it. Jaimz Woolvett, as the Kid, is vivid and true, his truth coming from some quite subtle line readings. Frances Fisher as the whore who thinks up the reward idea and Anna Thomson as the victim supply, respectively, anger and submission.

Jack N. Green's cinematography divides mostly between a few scenes shot in heavy rain and many scenes shot in standard Great Outdoors golden glow. Green's best shot is of a sunny, crisp, snow-covered landscape. (Inexplicably the snow disappears completely within a few days.) Joel Cox's editing is sometimes a bit skittery. For instance, the initial fracas in the brothel-and-saloon has some superfluous cutting back and forth.

As director, Eastwood certainly has helped his cast. But in other ways, his work shows an imagination that is both lively and unoriginal. He uses the familiar repertoire of Western shots: the long-range ridge shot, the riders silhouetted against the sun, the sculptured groups posed against immensity. He even uses one of Ford's hallmark shots a couple of times—from indoors through a doorway to pick up someone in the brightness outside. (Remember the last shot of *The Searchers*?) The chief visual nuance in *Unforgiven* is that all the pictorial apparatus customarily used to idealize heroes is here used for men of base morality. Intentional or not, this is a comment on the meretricious compliance of cinema iconography.

But Eastwood's really disturbing flaw as director is his acceptance of David Webb People's defective screenplay. The two cowboys ticketed for slaughter are not both guilty: the innocent one even tried to stop the knifer. After the price is set on their heads, they just hang around their ranch waiting to be shot at. (The marshal lamely covers this plot lapse by saying they'd probably rather stay with their friends.) English Bob is given a long character buildup, then is simply beaten up and sent away; it's not a role, it's a prop. Bob is accompanied by a biographer (out of the Altman-Kopit *Buffalo Bill*?) dragged in to give a sort of instant-mythic texture to the film.

Munny hears a greatly exaggerated story of the whore's disfigurement, and he further exaggerates it in retelling, yet when he sees the woman herself, he makes no comment about how he has been misled. Munny, who has never seen the miscreant cowboys, identifies them positively for killing on the basis of some rough drawings presumably done by one

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Best Intentions. *Bille August compassionately directs Ingmar Bergman's Strindbergian screenplay about his parents' courtship and early marriage. (Reviewed 8/10/92)* **Bob Roberts.** *A triple-threat that's more of a triple promise. Tim Robbins wrote, directed, and stars in this dazzling satire of political campaigning. Not really much enlightenment but lightning speed and sizzle. (10/5/92)* **A Brief History of Time.** *Stephen Hawking's life and work is necessarily synopsized but fascinating in Errol Morris's straightforward documentary. (9/28/92)* **Howards End.** *It's even better the second time, as many have discovered. Forster's masterpiece was adapted as well as could be expected and was directed and acted far above expectation. (3/23/92)* **—SK**

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of the whores. After Munny kills the first cowboy, neither the marshal nor the victim's friends ride after him. After the Kid kills the second one under Munny's direction, again no pursuit. Instead the killers pose picturesquely on a hillock outside of town waiting for the reward money.

For good reason, Munny later rides into town to confront the marshal, and though he is earlier shown to have lost his marksmanship, he now kills five men in a saloon full of armed opponents. When he rides off, again no one at all pursues him—and no one ever does, apparently, because our last view shows him back at home in Kansas.

And the symbolism! Some critics have helpfully pointed out the significance of Munny's name. With almost equal subtlety, the Kid is shortsighted, both literally and figuratively. The derided pecker tells us about the tenderest male vanity, particularly in a world in which gunplay is essential; the whores' offer of a bounty tells us about the revolt of women against suppression and about the vagina as purse. When Munny rides out of Big Whiskey near the end, there's an American flag in the corner of the frame for no perceptible reason other than to give film journals something to analyze. The whole heavy symbology of the film seems laid on to draw admiring attention to itself.

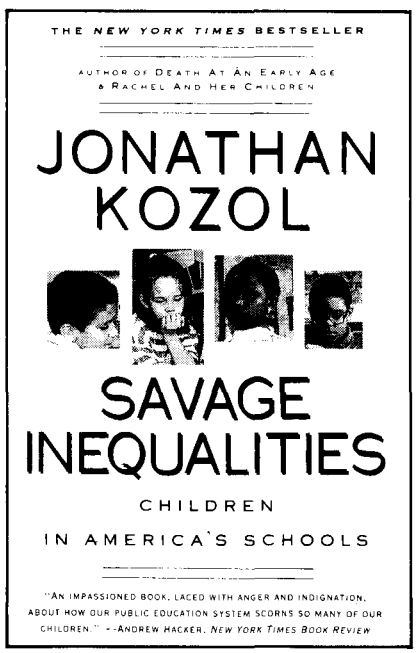
Then there's the casting of Freeman as Ned Logan. This is sheer *Lethal Weapon* stuff impasted on 1880. Of course there were black men in the West, and possibly some of them notorious outlaws, like Logan. But it is flatly incredible that, in those days, Logan could have gone through this entire story without one person—especially those who hate him—mentioning his color. Logan's female companion at home is an Indian squaw, which fact acknowledges the color lines of the time, but in Big Whiskey he goes upstairs to the brothel to visit one of the women, all of whom are white, without any of the men downstairs in the saloon objecting or any of the women making a comment. Logan is handled throughout with present-day egalitarianism, drastically anachronistic here.

When a film or play or novel has a murderer-protagonist with whom we are meant to empathize, we of the liberated late twentieth century leap to assume that some important new moral terrain is being explored. *Unforgiven* has evoked that response in many. But what is its terrain? Underneath this rickety screenplay, what is the film getting at thematically? Here we have a former killer, reformed by his now-deceased wife, who abandons his reclamation in order to get money for his children—by murder. Is this meant to be parental solicitude overriding personal salvation? He contends, as he rides north to the killings, that he is no longer the man he used to be. Is this the anesthesia of self-delusion or is it rationalized recidivism? He cold-bloodedly kills one man and helps in the killing of another, neither of whom has done him any harm. Is this a trip into moral vacancy à la Camus, or is it simply the resurgence of the mark of Cain?

His later killings have, in Western convention, some ethical basis, but it's his whole homicidal enterprise that makes them necessary. Then he takes the money back to his family and apparently lives happily with them thereafter. Have we been asked to sympathize with a cool professional killer whose sole claim to moral complexity is that, for ten years, he abstained from killing? Or are all these questions to be brushed aside merely because of the story's shadowy moral terrain?

Inevitably we're told that *Unforgiven* is about America today, American violence. (That glimpse of the flag!) For me, this comment is the most tenable of the lot if it's applied to the depredations of our everyday business life—ethical ravage that is justified, like Munny's, since it's done for the family—because at least it would help to explain the picture's great success: it offers absolution on our neighborhood screen for all of us

"An impassioned book, laced with anger and indignation... about how our public education system scorns so many of our children... Essential."
—Andrew Hacker, *New York Times Book Review*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"The forces of equity have now been joined by a powerful voice.... Kozol has written a searing exposé of the extremes of wealth and poverty in America's school system.... In public schooling, he argues, social policy during the Reagan-Bush era 'has been turned back almost 100 years.'"
—Emily Mitchell, *Time*

"This book digs so deeply into the tragedy of the American system of public education that it wrenches the reader's psyche.... A must-read for every parent, every educator, and every relevant policy maker."
—Alex Haley, author of *Roots*

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who err ethically for profit. Is that it, then—Saint Clint, who doesn't die for our sins but kills for them?

But, like other attempts to fix the so-called profundities of the film, this is much more philosophical bravado than convincing thought; it's just show-biz Veblen. These assumptions of analogy are more flattering to the analogizer than credibly rooted in the film's purpose. At the last, we're left with a film that tries to doll up a conventional genre with hints of depth, hoping to disguise the cross-dressing by putting it in the shape of an epic.

Murnau, Mizoguchi, Ford, even you authors of the Book of Genesis, rest easy. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Arts Wars II: The Empire Strikes Back

Americans are no doubt impatient with our endless debates about "obscenity," "blasphemy," and the National Endowment for the Arts. (I imagine you've had more than enough of my own recurrent broadsides, the last one delivered only a month ago.) But the Republican convention in August was a frightening demonstration that what at first seemed an intramural squabble over agency funding for artists has now become the basis for a broad-based plan to divide the entire nation along factional lines: "There is a religious war going on in this country for the soul of America," Patrick Buchanan stormed on the first night of the convention. "It is a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the cold war itself."

Buchanan's militaristic imagery is familiar enough in right-wing Republican lexicons, but his reference to the cold war confirms an earlier suspicion that the once marginal American artist has replaced the all-purpose Communist subversive as the primary virus in the fundamentalist-conservative imagination, the disease carrier infecting the Democratic Party and contaminating the nation. That this artist is often an activist homosexual—sometimes (as in PBS's "Tongues Untied") an African-American activist homosexual—endows the pestilence with feverish sexual, racial, religious, ethical, and political symptoms. The "family values" platform (fortified by Buchanan's ominous proposal to "take back our cities" by "force") is obviously intended to demonize anyone who deviates from white middle-class middlebrow heterosexual husband-dominated pro-life church-going habits. And what better candidate for this nefarious modern Satan than the gay or lesbian artist?

Military metaphors also permeate *Culture Wars* (New Press, 363 pp., $19.95), an anthology of materials about the recent controversies in the arts culled by the critic and artist Richard Bolton. Bolton—himself the subject of a (dismissed) obscenity complaint for a Boston exhibition on "Censorship, Sexuality, and the Body Politic"—has sifted among thousands of essays, articles, and documents to select 101 pieces that lay out the whole sorry fracas in excruciating detail and from every point of view. In addition to including illustrations of the materials that originally stimulated the controversy (most notably Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* and Robert Mapplethorpe's *X Portfolio*), he has contributed a balanced, well-reasoned, and comprehensive introduction.

To peruse all this stuff again is to gain an interesting historical perspective on the arc of the controversy—from Donald Wildmon's first alarum to the letter-writing campaign of his American Family Association, attacking Serrano for the "disrespect and desecration of Christ in our country," through the fulminations of Alfonse d'Amato, Jesse Helms, Pat Buchanan, Pat Robertson, Henry Hyde, William Dannemeyer, Dana Rohrabacher, and others (in identical language) against "dirty pictures" paid for with "taxpayer's money" to the collapse of the Corcoran Gallery in the face of the Mapplethorpe protest and the waffling of NEA chairman John Frohnmayer over later controversies, and ending with Helms's 1991 letter to Jerry Falwell asking for help in battling "the homosexual 'community,' the feminists, the civil libertarians, the pro-abortionists, the flag burners ... [and] their dangerous anti-family and anti-America agendas." The Bible-thumping, xenophobic, lunatic America depicted here would have baffled the imagination of Sinclair Lewis and clogged the pen of H. L. Mencken.

Clearly Serrano and Mapplethorpe were ideally suited to inflame the religious and sexual sensibilities of the right. Soon after, those inflammable Puritan sensibilities were ignited again by a group of performance artists, when Karen Finley covered her body with chocolate, Tim Miller proudly exhibited his erect organ, and Annie Sprinkle (who was never funded by the NEA) invited the audience onstage to examine her vagina through a speculum. Perhaps the most inflammatory event of all—which resulted in Frohnmayer temporarily overruling a grant to the Artist's Space—was David Wojnarowicz's catalog essay for the "Witness: Against our Vanishing" exhibit, where, "in the privacy of my own skull," he imagined himself "[dousing] Helms with a bucket of gasoline and [setting] his putrid ass on fire or [throwing] rep. William Dannemeyer off the Empire State building." (The columnist Richard Grenier was equally benevolent about Mapplethorpe: "I think I'd sprinkle him with kerosene and burn him up ... not just as self-expression but as *performance art*." Arts wars obviously bring out the incendiary in both camps.)

Regardless of the extreme nature of some of these statements and activities, the initial response of the artistic community—myself included in a piece Bolton reprints from *The New York Times*—was to defend the artist's First Amendment rights of free expression.

I still believe it was the correct response. Kathleen M. Sullivan and Floyd Abrams have eloquently argued the civil libertarian position that to enjoin one person's speech, however hateful, is to threaten all, and to impose content restrictions on artists or to ask them to sign "obscenity oaths" is an unconstitutional act of prior restraint. These opinions have been largely confirmed in the courts, and the restrictions placed on grant recipients were removed upon recommendation of the Independent Commission set up by Congress to monitor the NEA.

The right has continued to argue that sponsorship is not the same as censorship and that Congress has the obligation to prevent "taxpayers' dollars" from being wasted on artistic works that the majority found offensive. But one of the more valuable inclusions in this anthology is the text of the original legislation of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, signed into law by President Johnson, which held that

> while no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the federal government to help create and sustain *not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent* (italics mine).

Like the Constitution itself, this originating document was both wise and pre-

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scient about the potential tyranny of the majority. And it clearly established the federal government's support for artistic freedom both from censorship pressures and from marketplace pressures (often the same thing). Important as it was for protecting the rights of artists, however, the censorship argument has deflected our attention from the fact that only the most extreme voices have been heard on both sides. If Jesse Helms and his paleocon cohorts have characterized art as essentially blasphemous and immoral, many of their opponents on the left have done everything in their power to confirm that judgment. As the art critic Eleanor Heartney rather acidly put it, "Having at long last found a cause around which to rally, the art world is enjoying a rare consensus about its own importance as a last bastion of free expression in an increasingly censorious society."

Self-congratulation was earned at the cost of politicizing the issue entirely. In defense against powerful right-wing prejudices toward blacks, feminists, radicals, and particularly gays and lesbians, the arts community has been forced to speak the language not of culture but of advocacy. The spread of AIDS, for example, has created a storm of angry provocation on the part of many homosexual artists, outraged at society for its inadequate concern, outraged at the universe for the disease itself. As the art critic John Russell has written: "These are not people who go quietly and obediently. When they die, they die in rage. Foul in mouth and sometimes foul in body, they speak of hatred and choking. Who are we to reproach them for 'questionable taste'?"

What muddies the whole NEA issue is the tendency of extremists on both sides to confuse cutting-edge art with provocative sexual behavior. It's not just Buchanan accusing the gay arts community of trying "to provoke a Middle America too busy and distracted to be provoked; and to be honored and subsidized by a society they appear to loathe," or Hilton Kramer saying that the "cutting edge" is represented by that which "is most extreme and disruptive," or conservative artists like Frederick Hart speaking of "the cynical aggrandizement of art and artist at the expense of sacred public sentiments." It is a theme that also permeates the defensive, often hysterical statements of many of the artists themselves.

The result is a dialogue between two benighted factions with virtually no one arguing that offending the audience is a subsidiary effect rather than a primary purpose of advanced art, that shock is a possible result rather than the intended goal of new perceptions. Three years in the trenches of the arts wars have blunted our awareness that art has ground-breaking functions beyond the desire to violate the sensibilities of the straight society.

What I'm saying is that there has to be some avenue between the Scylla of art as morality and decency and the Charybdis of art as sensation and shock. We need a method of protecting the rights of activist artists and keeping the religious right at bay without surrendering to the idea that art has no purpose other than to offend. And we need more discussion about the wrongheaded opinion held across the political spectrum (and endorsed in Bolton's introduction): that the highest potential of art is as an agency of social change.

Of course I'm not suggesting that culture be scoured of sexual or political content, or that artists like Mapplethorpe be defended with purely formalistic arguments. The folly of this was demonstrated in the Cincinnati trial when one art critic described Mapplethorpe's self-portrait with a bullwhip up his ass as an "almost classical" composition and admired the "opposing diagonals" in his photo of a black man urinating down a white man's throat. Unlike Serrano's work, which is a serious effort, I believe, to address religious questions, Mapplethorpe's *X Portfolio* is a flamboyant exhibitionist's defiance of sexual convention, a dying man's rage against the dying of the light. No one should have been surprised when people rose up in horror. It was precisely what the artist intended.

Whatever the value of Mapplethorpe's art, however, its qualities have now been wholly lost in controversy and factionalism. As Elizabeth Hess suggested in *Art on Trial*, the Cincinnati trial over Mapplethorpe was less an effort to determine artistic value than a clash between incensed political sects. ("Which is worse?" she asked. "Getting lynched by right-wingers in Cincinnati, or getting lynched by members of the art world?") Unless we are willing to accept factionalism as the future of American art—along with congressional investigations, trials and lawsuits, testimony and acrimony—it is imperative to remind ourselves of the original impulse behind vanguard or cutting-edge expression, and to remember that the avant-garde excesses of Dada and surrealism were only a very small part of it.

It is true that there are plenty of examples of banned and censored artworks, or artworks that caused riots, though most have passed without incident. But the important thing to remember is that,

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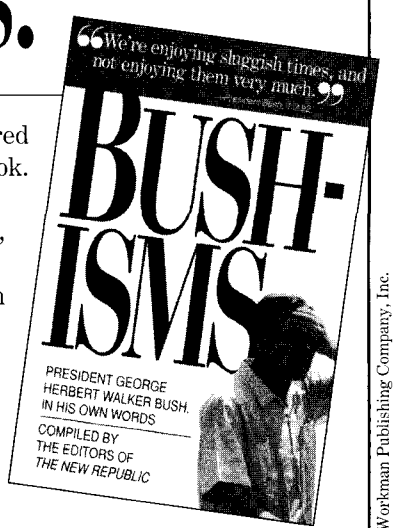
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once the noise died down, people were able to look behind the things that originally shocked them to new and penetrating perceptions. (The same thing, I suspect, will be true of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*—a raging "obscene" play about AIDS that is bound to offend but that clearly transcends its subject to become a profound and compassionate study of postwar America.) Controversy makes stars of artists for all the wrong reasons, distracting our attention from debates that should be more aesthetic than political. As the photography critic Andy Grundberg writes in the best essay in *Culture Wars*:

> The prevailing critical response has been to circle the wagons. Instead of arguing about aesthetics, critics spend their time defending the notion that artists can do and say whatever they please.... In an era when 'political correctness' has become a criterion for judging art, this response is doubly dangerous. For one thing, it plays into the hands of those who equate the outer edges of art with a radical political agenda.

In short, if modern art is to survive, we must find some way to protect the civil rights of artists without sacrificing our commitment to artistic standards—a task that will continue to daunt us until the arts wars come to an end. •

Over the Hill

BY SEAN WILENTZ

Restoration: Congress, Term Limits and the Recovery of Deliberative Democracy by George F. Will

(Free Press, 260 pp., $19.95)

As every schoolchild should know, there has long been a term limitation amendment to the United States Constitution. It is the Twenty-second Amendment, which limits presidents to two elected terms in office. Republicans plainly do know about the amendment, and they seem to be unhappy with its consequences. To judge from the speeches at the Houston convention, some party members appear to believe that the presidential term limit was an act of partisan political clairvoyance, ratified in order eventually to deny Ronald Reagan a second re-election. And so the calls to get even rang from the angry podium at the Astrodome: if the Republicans, the presidential party, have to put up with term limits, isn't it time to impose them on the liberal, power-crazy, good-for-nothing Democrat Congress and shift the balance of power?

Historical ironies abound in these partisan arguments about term limits. For the Twenty-second Amendment was, of course, a Republican initiative, aimed not at preventing a GOP stranglehold on the White House, but at blocking some future FDR. It came before Congress in 1947, that is, it was the product of the famous conservative Republican "do-nothing 80th Congress" that Harry Truman lambasted a year later, in the campaign that George Bush now says he will emulate. Bush as Truman, today's Democrats as the 80th Congress: while the Republican speakers attacked their opponents' convention as an ideological drag ball, the delegates at Houston enjoyed their own weird and wishful historical masquerade.

The partisan case for term limits is cynical. It is also probably an illusion, at least in the short term. There is no evidence to show that either party would benefit immediately from a restriction on congressional tenures. In recent history, Democrats have dominated "open" congressional elections (that is, where the incumbent has not run) as much as they have won congressional elections generally. Term limits are unlikely to change those figures very quickly. Endorsing term limits might be a convenient way for Republicans to batten on popular resentments and continue to pretend that they are the enemies of big government, but in raising term limits as a battle cry they are largely kidding themselves and the voters.

It is a relief, then, that George Will makes a different case for congressional term limits. He argues not as a Republican partisan, a role for which he has shown a weakness in the past, but as a conservative patriot—and, he proclaims more unexpectedly, as a friend to Congress. Capitol Hill, he contends, has become the captive of an intense and historically unprecedented careerism, and that careerism breeds timidity and forecloses genuine legislative deliberation. The tireless quest to hang on to office has left individual members of both parties dependent on pleasing special interests, which has all but robbed Congress of any larger notion of the public good. As a result, Congress has weakened itself morally and institutionally, and earned the opprobrium of the American public. Term limits, Will says, can help restore public faith, deliberative democracy, and congressional supremacy, "a traditional tenet of American conservatism."

Given the debates of the past twelve years, it may come as a surprise to hear a conservative brief for congressional supremacy. Since the republic's infancy, Congress and the executive have struggled over the separation of powers. With the advent of the cold war, a great deal of power, especially in matters of foreign policy, flowed away from Congress toward the White House and its institutional creatures. Reactions to the Vietnam War and Watergate—the War Powers Act, the attacks on the imperial presidency—reversed the tide in Congress's favor, only to set the stage for a reassertion of executive privilege. To be sure, presidents of both parties, liberals and conservatives, contributed over the years to the presidency's expanded claims. But it took the administration of the conservative Reagan to display the arrogant contempt for Congress that turned up in the Iran-contra affair. And it has taken the conservative administration of his successor to broach the suggestion that the president can lead the nation into war without congressional approval.

It is also surprising to see Will stand up for a populist reform. The common touch has never been one of his most obvious traits, intellectually or histrionically. He has made a career of speaking de haut en bas, even when the subject is baseball. But populism is rampant in this political season, and so it may be expected to show up in some unexpected places. Will is not, however, merely jumping on a bandwagon. He is a serious student of American politics. Unlike the recent president whom he admires most, Will does not lift his historical quotations from *The Toastmaster's Treasure Chest*. In his new book, he draws on the prominent writings of a politically eclectic group of professors, from Harvey Mansfield to Eric Foner. Will's reliance on current scholarship, especially in early American history, could even be offered as evidence against his fellow conservatives' blanket condemnations of the academy as a bastion of triviality and ideological posturing.

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From his wide reading Will has consistently fashioned a traditionalist, almost eighteenth-century complaint about the modern bureaucratic American state. In his earlier writings he labeled himself (with an exaggerated sense of his own originality) a Tory. Now, more in keeping with recent scholarly trends, he presents himself as a defender of classical republicanism and the legacy of *The Federalist.*

At the core of the republican beliefs that Will would have us revive are the concepts of virtue, independence, commonwealth, and citizenship. In a successful republic, according to the classical view, citizens and their representatives must be able to act virtuously, that is, to favor the public good (or commonwealth) over their private interests whenever the two come into conflict. To be virtuous, citizens must be independent, free of the economic or political will of other citizens. And to secure both virtue and the commonwealth, citizens must be active political participants, fulfilling what Aristotle considered man's essentially political nature.

Will recognizes that these republican ideals were not the only important ones at the nation's founding. The Declaration of Independence, after all, was delivered in the name of natural rights, not in the name of the virtuous commonwealth. And along with natural rights grew the American ideals of equality that have always served as solvents to the hierarchical assumptions of classical political theory. Various scholars, notably Paul A. Rahe, have actually challenged the idea that the Founders' republicanism reincarnated the Aristotelian and civic humanist traditions. American republicanism, moreover, quickly took on diverse meanings, open to political movements with very different aims. Federalists and Anti-Federalists, Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians, Whigs and Jacksonians all deployed the familiar republican terminology and tailored it to suit their larger political ends.

Will wishes to resuscitate the old vocabulary in its Federalist form, and to turn it into an argument for term limits. The Framers, he observes, wanted to distance the people's representatives from the fleeting passions of the people. Without this constitutional distance, they feared, representatives would be unable to deliberate virtuously in the pursuit of a true commonwealth. In the modern state, however, that distance has supposedly narrowed. Representatives now come to Congress not as public-spirited legislators but as professionals eager to build permanent political careers.

Sustaining those careers depends more and more on flattering constituents with federal programs and attracting media hype. Running for office becomes a year-round business. Particularist local interests, a drain on public funds, take precedence over the common good. Lawmaking is clogged. Representatives burn out or become cynical atoms of self-interest. Virtuous deliberation goes out the window. Term limits, Will writes, would curb congressional careerism and the excesses of modern democracy. They "are necessary for the fulfillment of the Framers' intentions in the nation's present situation, one the Framers did not anticipate, and could not have."

This reasoning is clever, but it quickly runs into a historical paradox, which Will recognizes in passing: the Framers actually decided *against* including term limits in the Constitution. It was a wise decision, Will thinks, because in 1787 limits "were not clearly connected with correcting a large problem."

That is putting the matter mildly. In fact, during the ratification debates of 1787-88, friends of the Constitution stoutly opposed term limits, often on precisely the same grounds invoked by those who oppose limits today. Perhaps the strongest argument against limits in the current debate is that they will remove worthy members. Another common argument is that they restrict popular sovereignty. Yet these were exactly the points that the Federalist Robert Livingston raised at the New York ratification convention in 1788, when he called congressional term limits "an absurd species of ostracism ... a mode of prescribing evident merit, and banishing from stations of trust those who have fulfilled them with the greatest faithfulness."

It was the enemies of the Framers' handiwork, the Anti-Federalists, who wanted most vociferously to see some limitations placed on congressional terms. Their essential argument was that, without some enforced rotation in office, elected officials would lose touch with the people, keep office with demagogic appeals, and turn into a corrupt oligarchy. "It is certainly inconsistent with the established principles of republicanism," declared the New York Anti-Federalist Melancton Smith, "that the senate should be a fixed and unchangeable body of men." Smith wanted individuals barred from re-election to the Senate for six years following the completion of a single term.

Similarly, the pseudonymous Philadelphian "Montezuma" ridiculed the Constitution for attempting to "[prevent] the representatives from moving with the *lower class,* and embracing their foolish sentiments." Without term limits, "Montezuma" continued, even the boldest elected officials would soon be socialized, made to think and to act like their colleagues, without regard to the citizenry. Term limits, according to the Anti-Federalist minority at the Pennsylvania ratification convention, would compel representatives to "participate in the burthens they impose on the community, as they must return to the common level, after a short period."

Will eschews such populist reasoning, and says that in the 1990s "the sensible reason for enacting term limits is not to forestall oppression but to nurture deliberation." Yet some of Will's other arguments are almost identical to the arguments of the Anti-Federalists. Thus, he dismisses the claims that term limits would unduly restrict popular sovereignty and notes that some of the most cherished features of our political life, including the Bill of Rights, proscribe "certain kinds of choices in order to guarantee the democratic values of an open society." Melancton Smith was pithier: "What is government itself, but a restraint on the natural rights of the people?" Will thinks that term limits would not exhaust the supply of able representatives, that plenty of others would come forward to serve from an American population that "is (in the late Eric Hoffer's splendid phrase) lumpy with talent." Smith said limits would "have a tendency to effuse a more general spirit of emulation [that is, competition], and to bring forward into office the genius and abilities of the continent."

So while he never quite says so, Will urges us to adopt what, historically, has been an Anti-Federalist populist reform in order to reach what he thinks of as a Federalist anti-populist goal—removing the people's representatives further from the public, to a more contemplative, virtuous place where they would be less tempted to bribe the public with federal pork and more inclined to deliberate on the commonwealth. In short, Will wants a Congress that is less responsive and more reasoned—and, between the lines, more likely to spurn needless, career-driven federal spending. (In effect, term limits would be an alternative, for Will, to a balanced budget amendment.)

Has Will properly framed the problem with Congress? And are term limits the solution? Our media age has certainly discouraged the idea of deliberative government, which was an idea that both Federalists and Anti-Federalists supported. Modern polling techniques,

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instant computer networks, faxing, and the rest have made representatives more aware than ever of what, at any given minute, is on the public's mind. And so leaders are turned remorselessly into followers. A manipulative game follows, in which officeholders try to make themselves appear to be on the right side of the right issues that will keep getting them elected.

At its most extreme, the very notion of representation is obliterated by visions of a high-tech plebiscitary government, along the lines of Ross Perot's ill-fated electronic town meetings. Short of that, representatives are increasingly supposed to act as the tribunes of some poll-manufactured popular will, with no minds of their own, and no inclination to reason or to debate with their colleagues—or with their constituents. This is a false populism, a high-tech mob politics. At best, it turns representatives into mere power brokers. At worst, it makes Congress vulnerable to sinister forms of massification, more likely to originate from the top down than from the bottom up. Term limits might be a countervailing force.

Likewise, term limits might, if only marginally, reduce the Newt Gingrich problem. (I mention the case of Gingrich, as does Will, not because it is singular, but because it is spectacular in its hypocrisy.) On the one hand, representatives are driven by the political facts of life to promise the voters fiscal responsibility and probity. For Gingrich, an extremist in the pursuit of virtue, this involves promises to eradicate what he calls America's welfare state. Yet come election time, especially in a close race (as Gingrich just faced in a primary, thanks to his unbalanced House bank account), representatives of both parties are quick to point out all that they brought to the district in federal money, thanks to their political savvy and connections on Capitol Hill. And, like most of the Republican voters of Cobb County, Georgia, the American electorate is too apt to accept the claims—although the recent primary defeat of another incumbent overdraft dodger, Mickey Edwards of Oklahoma, does show that the trend is not universal. Regardless of ideology, representation finally degenerates into another word for wiring public spending on almost any project under the sun, in order to keep incumbents in office, election after election.

Yet Will's conservative view of Congress's woes is also slanted and incomplete. For all of the pandering that goes on between Congress and the public, there is still a widespread impression of public powerlessness along the lines that the Anti-Federalists feared—not simply because representative institutions are failing the country, but because ordinary citizens have little voice in what happens in Washington. It should come as no surprise that the long-term decline in incumbent turnover has accompanied a decline in voter participation and an atrophy of other vital signs of democratic life.

There are numerous grounds for this breakdown in democratic faith. Probably the major reason that so many House incumbents now stay in office for so long is not pork-barrel spending but districting—the increasingly exact, computer-assisted science whereby the respective parties divide up the electoral map and protect their respective turfs, regardless of the geographic and civic realities of actual community life. (Will discusses the point briefly, then drops it.) Gerrymandering, of course, goes back to colonial times, although the term was only coined in 1815. Now, however, the proliferation of non-competitive designer districts (further encouraged by mandates for race-specific outcomes) has reached levels unimagined by Elbridge Gerry. Once upon a time, as a policy-expert friend of mine puts it, constituents chose their representatives; but now, more than ever, the parties choose the constituents for their representatives. On its own, no term limitation thus far proposed would do much to affect these procedures, and their dampening effect on democratic citizenship. Parties will still seek out increasingly contorted rotten boroughs, regardless of incumbency. Indeed, the term limits movement might even distract attention from this deeper problem.

Then there is the issue of money and power. For a self-proclaimed admirer of classical republicanism, Will says remarkably little about the old, fundamental republican anxieties concerning commercial abuses and the propensity for private monied interests to conspire and corrupt legislators. Instead he is fixated on how legislators use federal money to corrupt the electorate. Yet every thirty years or so, Americans seem to rediscover the treachery of the supposedly beneficial collaboration between private capital and public power. It has happened again in the 1990s, as the scandals involving the S&Ls, BCCI, and other money pits have made the Crédit Mobilier of the first Gilded Age look like child's play—and done profoundly greater damage to the public treasury. Aside from the outrageous scandals, there are the hundreds of other little ways in which representatives learn that

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the business of America is corporate business. Will looks to term limits to encourage virtue. A sterner view of human nature might recommend more exacting forms of public accountability, beginning with the ways that campaigns are financed.

Would term limitation enlarge the social base of Congress? At one point Will slips into a more consistent Anti-Federalist populist mode and implies that it would. At the very least, he writes, term limits "affirm the democratic faith in the broad diffusion in the public of the talents necessary for the conduct of the public business." Yet in practice, he later observes, the kinds of people who might choose to run for Congress for a limited term "are apt to come from serious careers." Americans "with serious careers" amount to a considerably smaller slice of the population than the more populist Will implies term limits would bring to Washington. Will's reforms would probably mean choosing among already successful lawyers and businessmen, perhaps a bit more established than the droves of lawyers and businessmen who now inhabit the Hill. Term limits, in short, would affirm no democratic faith at all. They would, instead, install an updated version of the old Federalist (and later Mugwump) faith in the gentleman amateur, stabilizing and perhaps even further constricting the sociology of congressional representation, and doing nothing to relieve the cynicism of the public.

Moreover, behind Will's higher amateurism there seems to lurk a long-term encouragement of the kinds of partisan and ideological considerations that he claims should count for nothing in the term limits debate. Quoting his fellow pundit Norman Ornstein, Will notes that under today's careerist regime the most talented Republicans generally prefer business and the professions to government service, while for Democrats "a career in politics and government is much more highly prized." Is term limitation thus finally a thinly disguised attempt to help eventually entice more pro-business Republican types to Congress?

It is even possible that term limits would, simply and paradoxically, reshuffle the problem of crass careerism. Will acknowledges the possibility, discounts it as no worse than the current situation, and states his faith in those virtuous notables with "serious careers" of their own. Still, under proposed term limit laws, representatives might well be drawn to spending twelve years in the House currying favor as ever, at home and in Washington, in order to win another twelve years in the Senate, followed by ... well, who knows? On another career track, representatives might pass the time angling to cash in with a position in the sprawling D.C. private sector of fixers, consultants, and corporations. (How're you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen D.C.?) Or they might choose the Bush path, to a future in the appointive federal and party bureaucracies, with perhaps a try at another electoral office down the line. None of these career trajectories is especially conducive to the cultivation of firm principles and virtuous deliberation. They might even wind up reinforcing the insider, schmoozy style of government that Will would like to uproot.

Other dangers come to mind. As Will himself admits, term limits will truncate great careers and throw out the wheat with the chaff, just as the Federalists said they would. (Under a two-term senatorial limit, Will's beloved Henry Jackson would have been gone in 1964.) And, almost inevitably, term limits would rob congressional leaders of an important measure of accumulated national stature and authority, especially in their dealings with an overweening and sometimes devious executive branch. How would this serve the cause of congressional supremacy? How is Congress, moreover, supposed to adapt its own institutions to the term limit regime? Term limits would surely derange the seniority system, which might not be entirely a bad thing. But what would replace it? An unending series of party caucuses? Authoritarian

Grace

The thought of the woman you couldn't make happy
Made happy by someone else
Will have to trouble you less than it does now
If you want to disprove the doctrine of the Fall
And enter the world of grace abounding.

On the day you cross the border, you'll be free.
The town she left won't seem so tiny,
The streets so empty and predictable.
Linger too long with your book at dinner
And you'll miss the walk to the river at dusk
When the rare, shy creatures make their appearance.

Then if you walk away from the town's glare
To watch for a few of the brightest stars,
You won't be doing it to impress her,
To prove you can be intimate with the beautiful
Without a craving for ownership.
You'll be enjoying the stars for their own bright sakes.
There they'll be, Vega, Spica, Aldebaran,
High above the sagging garage roof or silo.

On the walk back, you'll linger at the outskirts,
Pausing at an open window to listen.
With the radio waves free of the daytime clutter
Talk shows from Phoenix and Memphis will be coming in clear.
Now they seem a mixture of rancor and confusion.
Then they'll sound like half-truths waiting to be fused
By a power within you still not discovered.

It will be easy then to love the truth
Just for itself, to be content with its cool
Impersonal light. No need to believe
That your contentment, if she learned of it,
Would give her pleasure she's always wanted.
You'll want to believe she has pleasure enough
Of her own making, should she need to make it,
Should her new friends prove unreliable.
But you won't be happy if they do. Not then,
When the sweet water of grace begins to flow.

CARL DENNIS

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rule by a few chosen leaders?

Will asserts that the cold war had a "distorting impact on American government," creating a "national security state" that deepened the country's fixation on the presidency. There are further ironies here, as Will's conservatism converges with the arguments and even the vocabulary of the populist left. Peace, it's wonderful! But the cold war encouraged a lot of other things besides an overblown White House—the rise of semi-clandestine agencies and the cult of secrecy, a revolving-door syndrome between the public and private sector, the militarization of Keynesian economics, followed by a spree of deficit spending with insufficient attention to long-term social investment. With the end of the cold war, Americans can at last demobilize, rebuild, and perhaps widen the sphere of public debate, free (we might hope) of the political and ideological constraints of the past forty years.

George Will, the Anti-Federalist Federalist, has contributed to that debate with the strongest case for term limits yet. His arguments are unlikely to encourage those snarling "clean-the-House" Republicans who back term limits for what Will claims are all the wrong reasons; he might even cost the term limit movement some of its support. The rest of us might deliberate about whether, on balance, Will's suggestions will really help restore the faith of citizens and the reasoned gravitas of government, or inadvertently corrupt and otherwise weaken Congress in new, unanticipated ways.

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The Limits of Eloquence

BY DONALD FANGER

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky translated with an introduction and notes by David McDuff

(Viking, 647 pp., $24.95)

Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky translated and annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky

(Knopf, 564 pp., $25)

If poetry is what gets lost in translation, what is one to say of the translated novel? Titles, to be sure, may lose their poetic resonances, or acquire new ones, in the journey from the original to another language. Saltykov-Shchedrin's great *Gospoda Golovlevy* limps into English as *The Golovlyovs* or *The Golovlyov Family*, because English has no plural for "mister" (let alone one that might cover both sexes), whereas French can preserve Shchedrin's ironic distance by calling it *Les Messieurs Golovleff*. We, on the other hand, distance ourselves from the naughty French by leaving Flaubert's title untranslated, preferring the exoticism of *Madame Bovary* to the homelier *Mrs. Bovary*. For slightly better reasons, we refuse the flat accuracy of *The Karamazov Brothers* in favor of the more dignified if by now archaic *The Brothers Karamazov*, and for better reasons still—lest it sound like a manual on parenting—we narrow Turgenev's *Fathers and Children* to *Fathers and Sons*. Nabokov himself rejected the literalism that would have given us a flat-footed title like *The Exploit* or *The Feat*, choosing to render his *Podvig* more freely and more suggestively as *Glory*.

But titles are one thing, novels another. Where the units of meaning are so much larger than in poetry—where the main thing is experiencing a pattern of events over time, and processing them in much the way we process events in life—how important are the actual words that encode that experience (particularly when we know them to be understudies and not the original actors)? Whatever version of *Crime and Punishment* we read, with whatever awkwardnesses and inaccuracies, isn't the power of having lived Raskolnikov's nightmare likely to be pretty much the same?

That is the commonsense view, and it echoes a broader Russian tendency to regard Dostoevsky as a psychologist, philosopher, cultural reporter, and political prophet so brilliant that his slapdash style and substandard language could be pardoned, if not entirely overlooked. The late Tolstoy opined that Dostoevsky did not write well "because he had too much to say"—a remarkable writer but not, alas, much of an artist. The early Hemingway agreed: "How can a man write so badly, so unbelievably badly, and make you feel so deeply?"

And yet, of course, Dostoevsky's brilliance, once felt, *has* to be seen as a result of art—of an art as disconcertingly new as the themes it embodied. Because he wrote in an age of realism, Dostoevsky's principled deviation from the suppositions of realism was bound to look like a failure to measure up. In confining himself (at times just barely) to prevalent notions of the possible, he was respecting only the outer limits of realism; he scornfully rejected contemporary notions of the plausible or the probable. "I have completely different concepts of reality and realism," he insisted, "than do our realists and critics.... They stay on the surface.... With their realism you won't explain one-hundredth of the real, actually occurring facts."

So Russia in his books is rendered faithfully—its topography, its climate, its social conditions, above all its remarkably various speech, replete with the hesitations, the approximations, the oddnesses, and the solecisms of speech in real life. But all of this goes to building the specifically Dostoevskian world, which is like no other:

> In Dostoevsky's world there are no facts that stand on their own feet. They all "prop up" one another, pile up on one another, depend on one another. But even this dependence is of a special kind. The phenomena in question are all somehow unfinished: the ideas are unfinished,... the story is unfinished; information about the events which the narrator has assembled is contradictory; the details and the whole alike are unclear; everything seems to be in the stage of becoming clear—it is still being tracked down. Everything is in the process of becoming, and is therefore not determined and far from static.... The phe-

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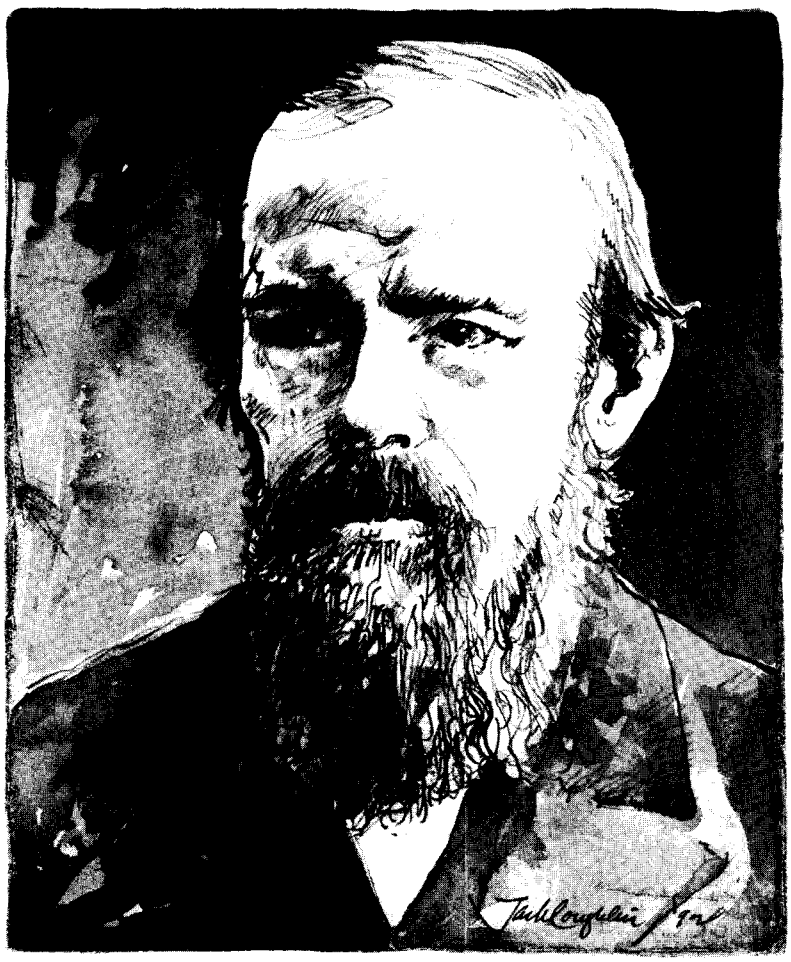
nomena of life project out of some unknownness, some Rembrandt-like penumbral darkness.

This formulation comes from Dmitri Likhachev, the grand old man of Russian cultural historians, and it is meant to suggest the unusual artistic function of Dostoevsky's style, which Likhachev sees as one oriented toward an incompleteness that will provoke the reader into supplying what the author withholds by way of explanation and interpretation. Its repetitions and irregularities express a groping toward statable truth; the oddities of expression serve to create "exceptionally capacious indeterminacies"—as do the ubiquitous trademark qualifiers: "partly," "apparently," "somewhat," "somehow," "a kind of," "as it were." Dostoevsky's unconventional style crackles with implication and with weird new tonalities. It is the material manifestation of his unconventional enterprise. And one of its effects, as Likhachev puts it, is to "free the work from outward beauty." Eloquence, elegance—anything that imparts a "finish" to what is said—would appeal to ready-made, hence alien categories. Dostoevsky is not merely out to frustrate his readers' expectations; he wants to undermine the whole network of habitual associations on which they rest.



FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The most suggestive account of Dostoevsky as fictional innovator is undoubtedly that of Mikhail Bakhtin. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*, which appeared in 1929 (it was revised and expanded in 1963 as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*), he claimed the Dostoevskian novel as a nonpareil, nothing less than a mutation in the history of the genre. Bakhtin shuns interpretation. Nor does he attempt to test his theory with a sustained analysis of any single novel. Still, however shaky his absolutist claims, Bakhtin's insights into the innovative tendencies of Dostoevsky's art are profound and fundamental.

The impersonal Dostoevskian narrator, on Bakhtin's showing, eschews omniscience, letting the characters speak and contend for themselves without limiting authorial interpretation. Those characters—the central ones, at least—exist chiefly in the present. They are largely unconstrained (and certainly undefined) by the little we know about them before the present action of the book. They do not "develop," they oscillate. Conceived essentially as consciousnesses, they manifest themselves above all as voices. Their contention, accordingly, takes the form of dialogue.

Dialogue—here I simplify drastically—is more than a matter of conversation. It is a matter of using another's word in one's own (necessarily different) sense—of assimilating and thereby changing its sense. There are no ownerless words. The words in every utterance are stamped as belonging to a specific speaker at a specific moment in a specific context, and can only be understood as such. Built into every utterance, moreover, is the awareness of an alternative position: hence the Bakhtinian categories of "the word with a loophole" and "the word with a sideward glance" to designate things said with a view to unsaying them later, or with an awareness of possible rejoinders. These features show up even in interior monologues, demonstrating how easily they, too, can become covert dialogues.

The result is an exceptionally fluid, "unfinalized" world. Today's haughty superman may be a humble Everyman tomorrow—and everything conspires to remind us that there will be tomorrows after that. "So long as man is alive, he has not spoken his final word." Even death does not arrest the process: the deceased departs, "but his word remains" as an element in the unendi[illegible] dialogue.

To these cardinal Dostoevskian notions of dialogue and "unfinalizability," Bakhtin adds "liminality," stressing the importance of thresholds in the constitution of the novelist's world. Thresholds are, in the broadest sense, the place where one thing—an idea, a consciousness, a mood, an identity—borders on another, often its opposite, and they are (in all their many senses, including the literal) where the essential Dostoevskian action takes place. The Underground Man indicates this when he speaks of what are simultaneously "the most ludicrous and the most terrible" minutes of his life; and the same traffic back and forth between those categories can be seen in *Crime and Punishment* in the account, at once farcical and harrowing, of the funeral dinner for Marmeladov. Dostoevsky called his method "fantastic realism" to indicate the juncture of the most real reality and the most utter fantasy, of the most mundane and the least mundane things in the world.

These are some indices of his innovation, and they are there to surprise u[illegible] on every level of his books, from structure and plot and theme to syntax, grammar, and vocabulary.

Obviously, if you set out to translate Dostoevsky, the extent to which you see and believe these things will make a great difference to the way you English him. If, for example, you are alert to his tendency to heighten and to hyperbolize, to use the superlative degree not only in expressions that normally

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accommodate it but, stretching Russian usage, to suggest it in expressions that really can't accommodate it, and if you see these tendencies as constitutive of the novel, rather than as evidence of mere carelessness, then you will try to stretch your English accordingly. (The challenge is formidable, because the two languages are differently jointed: the unsettling omission of an adverb, leaving only the intensifier, is strange in Russian, but it works—as when the detective Porfiry assures Raskolnikov that they will be "very and very seeing each other.") If, on the other hand, you find repetition awkward and vagueness a flaw, then you will minimize them. But you must have some model in your head. You cannot work without criteria for texture, tone, orchestration, and tempo. In the worst case, your model will not have been deliberately chosen.

That, regrettably, is what goes without saying in the two books under review, as in the great majority of published translations. Presumably the translators have undertaken their task—especially in the case of *Crime and Punishment*, where we already have versions by Constance Garnett (revised and unrevised), David Magarshack, Jesse Coulson, Michael Scammell, Sidney Monas, and others—because they want to get it right, or righter. Why, then, don't they tell us what they take to be the salient features of the original? Which aspects of the original have they most tirelessly tried to English, and which they have found intractable? What they have found missing in earlier translations? What compromises they have found themselves obliged to make, and why? What general criteria of acceptability they have employed?

Both David McDuff and the Pevear-Volokhonsky team have equipped their editions with an introduction and notes, but neither attempts to engage such questions, preferring instead to discuss background and problems of interpretation. McDuff observes with apparent regret that ideological factors prevail over "purely aesthetic" ones in most analyses of the novel, then turns abruptly to other matters. Richard Pevear does a bit more, citing Dostoevsky's claim that his novels were works of poetry and stressing the novelty of their effects. But he has nothing to say about the means that produce those effects beyond asserting the importance of "every cadence" and "every tone." (In his notes to the dramatic tête-à-tête in Part Six between Svidrigailov and Raskolnikov's sister Dunya, he does flag an important device that English cannot reproduce, noting the places where Dunya, who has been using the polite second-person plural form, "suddenly addresses Svidrigailov in the familiar second-person singular, which Russians generally use only with family and intimate friends." The shift, as he says, "has a strong effect for the Russian reader," though I think he misidentifies that effect as being to suggest "more to their relationship than has appeared so far"; it simply marks the extremity of emotional tension their psychological duel reaches at this point, and it has its unnoted counterpart in an earlier tête-à-tête when Raskolnikov, losing control, wails to the detective Porfiry, "You keep lying!")

Still, something of the translators' respective strategies can be inferred. If my rough calculations are correct, McDuff uses some 286,560 words to render Dostoevsky's text, over 40,000 more than the Pevear-Volokhonsky version. And what is true of words is true of syllables, making for a solid and leisurely quasi-Victorian read. McDuff's version fosters the reassuring sense that we are dealing with a conventional nineteenth-century novel. In the first of the examples below, Pevear-Volokhonsky actually use eight words to McDuff's seven—Dostoevsky needs only three—but the effect is swifter all the same.

> The furniture was commensurate with its surrounding. (McDuff)
>
> The furniture was in keeping with the place. (Pevear-Volokhonsky)

> During the course of their conversation, Raskolnikov studied her fixedly. (McDuff)
>
> As they spoke, Raskolnikov studied her closely. (Pevear-Volokhonsky)

> For some reason, on the other hand, he had got along with Razumikhin; or, if that were putting it too strongly, had at least been on more communicative, more plain-talking terms with him. (McDuff)
>
> Yet for some reason he became more close with Razumikhin—that is, not really close, but he was more sociable, more frank with him. (Pevear-Volokhonsky)

Of the party in the room next to the Marmeladovs':

> From time to time snippets of the most improper language came drifting through. (McDuff)
>
> Occasionally the most unceremonious words would fly out. (Pevear-Volokhonsky)

Some of this quantitative difference comes also from *otsebyatina*, the Russian term for the translator's own embellishments of the author's text. McDuff is much readier to volunteer explanations of what Dostoevsky alludes to glancingly or unclearly. A small example occurs in the first chapter, where Raskolnikov, still half incredulous, is on his way to rehearse the murder. Even in his thoughts he is skittish in referring to his project; it is "*that*" or "*it*," italicized to suggest the charge it carries for him. What he says in the Russian is: "If I am so afraid this time around, then what would be if it somehow actually got as far as *the thing* [*delo*: the "business" or "affair," i.e., the murder] itself?..." Pevear-Volokhonsky, leaving out the italics that would make their phrase faintly ludicrous, have him say: "If I'm so afraid now, what if it really should somehow get down to the business itself?..." McDuff, omitting the ellipsis with its suggestion of an unspoken continuation, makes it all straightforwardly personal: "If I'm as scared as this now, what would I be like if I were really to *go ahead* with my plan?"

McDuff removes the shadows. (Compare these two renderings of a sentence from the opening page of the novel: "And each time he passed by, the young man felt some painful and cowardly sensation, which made him wince with shame"; "And each time, as he passed it, the young man had a morbid sensation of fear, of which he was ashamed and which caused him to frown." In the first, Pevear-Volokhonsky preserve Dostoevsky's vagueness about what Raskolnikov is feeling; in the second, McDuff normalizes it.) McDuff's diction throughout tends to be smooth and logical, his vocabulary old-fashioned. Where Garnett referred to "pot-houses" and Pevear-Volokhonsky have "taverns," McDuff gives us "drinking dens." Nor does quaintness stop there. We meet a woman "in a *golovka* and goat-skin shoes," and a man, "wearing a long-waisted *poddyovka*." We watch Marmeladov "prod[ding] a finger at his half-*shtof* of vodka." The queer Beerbohm-like charm of such passages reaches its apogee in the crucial scene between Dunya and Svidrigailov. Where Pevear-Volokhonsky have him sitting, sensibly enough, "at least seven feet away from her," McDuff writes, "He himself sat down at the other end of the table, a good sagene* away from her, at any rate." Following the asterisk to the back of the book, the reader is informed that "a sagene, or *sazhen'*, was equivalent to 2.134 meters."

One has to regret whatever pressures kept both sets of translators and editors from another round or two of revision, for both versions have their lapses as well as their felicities. Pevear-Volokhonsky can fall into banality: "It

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was a most ordinary matter, and there was nothing very special about it." (Compare McDuff's truer rendering: "The matter was of the most ordinary kind, and involved nothing particularly remarkable.") And McDuff can show himself more happily resourceful in dealing with the impossibilities of Porfiry's colloquially insinuating Russian—not just *ekh!* and *okh!* and *akh!* (very different from our "eh!" or "oh!" or "ah!") and his constant casual diminutives, but the way he calls Raskolnikov "father" (*batiushka* and *otets*) and "dear" (*rodimen'kii* and *milen'kii* and *golubchik*). McDuff's "my dear chap" and "my dear fellow" are better than "my dear" or "my good man." Where Pevear-Volokhonsky have Porfiry exclaim at one point, "Rodion Romanovich, my dear! But you'll drive yourself out of your mind this way, I assure you, a-ah!," McDuff has: "Rodion Romanovich! My dear chap! You know, you'll drive yourself crazy if you go on like this, I do assure you—a-ach! Dear me! [*Ekh!*]"

Where McDuff elects to clarify constantly and expand incrementally, massaging our memories of English fiction 100 years ago, Pevear-Volokhonsky aim at a sparer, more nervous and nimble Anglophone narration that is neither quite American nor quite British, and harder to date. Each is readable. In the end, however, Bakhtin was right: "Dostoevsky has still not become Dostoevsky."

For that to happen in English, fully, on every page, the translator would have to be an accomplished novelist, with a sure sense of the effects of the original and the creative strategies to surprise them into a secondary existence. Nor can it be enough by now to preserve strangeness while minimizing abrasion. Archaeological awareness is needed as much as linguistic tact if all the voices in Dostoevsky's prose—the idiosyncratic voices of the characters, but also the shifting voices of the narration as it ranges from the terse to the melodramatic, and orchestrates echoes of Balzac and Dickens, Hugo and Sue (not to mention the anticipations of later writers)—are to be made recognizable. The order is dauntingly tall. Meanwhile the real Dostoevsky, the Dostoevsky absent from all the translations, can be at least dimly descried by juxtaposing them: behind the windows of their discrepancies, that movement in the semidarkness is his.

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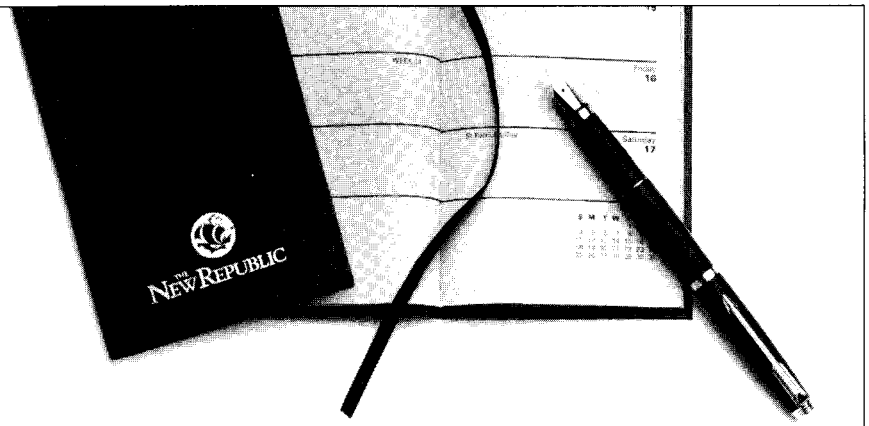

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Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men edited by Essex Hemphill, conceived by Joseph Beam

(Alyson Publications, 274 pp., $8.95 paper)

Homosexuality in literature takes many forms. A teacher suspects his motives for wishing to separate a pupil from his parents. A black American sees his affection for a bisexual African as a kind of economic exploitation. A transvestite dishes the writer Brett Easton Ellis and teases the nipples of the rock star Adam Horovitz. The diversity of these stories might lead some to wonder whether there is such a thing as "gay literature." Indeed, the meaning of the category is the subject of a vigorous if implicit debate in the new anthologies promoting gay fiction. (In recent years the anthology has become the preferred method for introducing gay literature to a wider readership. Publishers want to demonstrate the variety of gay writing, and to do it quickly before more of the writers fall to AIDS.) Despite their admirable motives, however, the new anthologists have found it harder to tie together such a diverse body of material.

The different principles of selection that the various editors bring to their work suggest disagreement about the ways that sexuality functions in literature. Edmund White takes the broadest approach in his collection. It attempts an overview of gay literature by moving from its beginnings at the end of the nineteenth century through its flowering after the Stonewall riots of 1969. White places acknowledged masters of modern fiction—Henry James, E. M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood, William Burroughs, Tennessee Williams, and James Baldwin—alongside rising writers of the post-Stonewall generation. Some of the younger writers—David Plante, Alan Gurganus, and David Leavitt—are well known among general readers. Some—Andrew Holleran, Armistead Maupin, and Robert Gluck—are well known among gay readers. And some—such as James M. Estep and William Haywood Henderson—are comparative newcomers.

White claims that sexuality has natural affinities with literature. Gay writers, he believes, are born storytellers and travelers, for homosexuality, like writing, is inherently adventurous—exalting, annihilating, perilous. Yet White is interested less in the way sexuality shapes authors than in the way it shapes stories. He chooses his contributors primarily for the explicitly sexual content of their subject matter, and, except for Henry James, those gay authors whose plots do not emphasize homosexuality are excluded. White sees gay fiction as something more than stories by homosexuals. It records a particular process of self-fashioning: the "passage from homosexual desire to gay identity." This transition finds its literary form in the coming-out tale, which recounts the moment of self-knowledge or public declaration when a troubling identity becomes an accepted fact.

While no one denies the importance of White's stories to something called "gay literature," the location of that gayness in this primal gay plot seems too literal. Not only does it exclude many writers—Truman Capote, even John Cheever—who might in some broader sense be read as gay, but it does not define coherently what a "gay story" might be. Taken to its logical extreme, White's emphasis on an essentially sexualized plot would reduce gay literature to only those moments—paragraphs, sentences, words—in which sexuality is discussed.

White probably does not mean to imply that an author is gay only when writing about sex. But his reticence on these larger issues leaves too many questions unanswered. How many times must an author focus on sexuality before he is considered to be generally interested in sexuality? Is there a literary difference between the Alan Gurganus who writes about cruising bathrooms on 87-South and the Alan Gurganus who writes about the oldest living Confederate widow? And what, by White's criterion, is the status of Mary Renault or Patricia Nell Warren, who, though women, wrote two of the most influential novels about gay men, *The Charioteer* and *The Front Runner*?

White's focus on coming-out as the quintessential gay experience is no less problematic. Since the late '60s and early '70s, activists have urged people openly to announce their otherwise invisible sexual preferences; but twenty years later it seems optimistic to claim that sexual visibility necessarily leads to social acceptance. Some racial and religious groups remain oblivious to homosexuality within their communities, and in several professions, most notably in the military, coming-out is tantamount to career suicide. Sexual confessions, moreover, can be not only economically impractical, but psychologically demoralizing. In its preoccupation with the opinion of others, coming-out sometimes looks like a bid for heterosexual sympathy, even for absolution. White's insistence that gay literature has the "obligation to explain" concedes too much. Explain what, and to whom? To people happy with their sexuality and who reject the social definition of the normal, there is nothing to explain, there is no "closet" to leave.

If coming-out is imperfect as an instrument of personal or political redemption, it is even more limited as a literary motif. There are only so many ways of describing the process of sexual awakening. It has often been remarked that, after Williams, Capote, and McCullers, we really don't need more stories about growing up gay in the South. Those plots in White's anthology that emphasize sexual discoveries—about oneself, one's parents, one's boorish cousin Alexander—can seem interchangeable. And equally repetitive are the stories involving ethnic homosexuality, which conventionally end with the discovery that one can be gay and still be true to one's race, religion, ethnicity, or class. In fiction, coming-out tends not to open stories up but to close them down. Like the multiple marriages that wind up Victorian novels, coming-out functions as a prema-

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turely happy ending. Such narratives will always seem incomplete for those who think that life remains interesting even after everyone knows who is or isn't gay.

White's selections are of a uniformly high quality, and one welcomes their return to (or first appearance in) print. Yet White's explanation of what makes the works "gay" is less convincing. Often these stories succeed most when, like Maupin's "Suddenly Home," they depart from the coming-out model, or when, like Isherwood's "Mr. Lancaster," they transcend it with philosophical and linguistic density.

A more confrontational sense of the relation between sexuality and literature is offered in Dennis Cooper's *Discontents: New Queer Writers.* For Cooper, both sex and fiction are sites of political struggle. Recently some activists have begun to attack the '60s notion of homosexuality, objecting that the post-Stonewall liberation movement, in promoting a "gay sensibility," really addressed only the white middle-class males in the community. The most obvious sign of such prejudice was the hostility toward women and black men in the gay meccas of the Castro, West Hollywood, Greenwich Village, and Fire Island. Substituting the word "queer" for the tainted word "gay," the new activists dissociate themselves from what they decry as the racism and the sexism of "gay" culture, and from the nonconfrontational political tactics of the Gay Liberation movement.

It is in the general context of this furious debate between older liberal gays and younger radical queers that Cooper locates his authors. His collection stands as a "wake-up call" to traditional gay anthologies, with Cooper playing rebel leader to White's role of elder statesman. As with Queer Nation, the activist group most concerned with revolutionizing "gay" politics, the debate begins as one about minority representation. White's authors are almost exclusively white middle-class urban males. Cooper's "queer" collection is more diverse. It includes work by women, and by men who are neither white, middle-class, nor on the Castro-Village circuit.

These differences concerning race and gender originate in a fundamental disagreement about literature. For Cooper, the true villain is not the elitism of White's stories but their aesthetics, their belief that fiction should realistically describe human emotions and situations. Rejecting the careful plotting and the elegant prose of the conventional short story, Cooper's fictions are self-consciously experimental—both "ultra-literary" and "postliterate." Few are concerned with character development, or with narrative. Many challenge the distinction between fiction and non-fiction by presenting themselves as whacked-out autobiography. Playlets and odd typography interrupt even the most straightforward narratives. "Alternative" cartoons are interspersed amidst the prose. And the whole is peppered with violence and vulgarity—sadomasochism, disembodiment, and excrement.

Such experiments can seem like just business as usual among the terminally hip. Writers like Dorothy Allison and Gary Indiana temper their vulgarities with poetic cadences. But many aspire so little to a high literary style that their works seem less postliterate than preliterate, less cutting edge than dull. At its best, what saves the indifferent prose from degenerating into verbal assault is its humor. The wittiest piece in Cooper's collection is "Myself Sexual," Vaginal Creme Davis's diatribe against L.A. trendoids, a camp monologue that is two-thirds drag review and one-third *Finnegans Wake.*

But the barbs strike deeper when they are directed inward. Halfway through the book, Canadians Johnny Noxzema, G. B. Jones, and Jena von Brucker meet for their "Naked Lunch," a trashing of everything about the gay punk scene from William Burroughs and trust fund performance artists to this book itself. The grumpy dialogue forgoes the high wit of the Algonquin for the low dish of the ladies who lunch. But whatever the conversation's strictly literary merit, it is admirable for refusing to dignify with high seriousness the supposedly solemn topics of coming-out and the "broad scope" of gay literature. Cooper's feisty collection offers a welcome antidote to the apologetic stateliness of the traditional gay anthology.

Still, it is possible to wonder what part queerness plays in these fictions. In such a surreal setting, of course, sexuality does not surface as anything so pedestrian as an identity crisis. These writers reject coming-out anxiety as just more middle-class angst. "Queerness" need not even imply sexual activity at all. In these stories it resides not in plot, but in tone and style. Homophobes frequently use negative adjectives of extravagance, like "outrageous" and "flamboyant," to characterize homosexuals, but this anthology turns that cliché on its head by implying that, yes, extravagance and homosexuality *are* the same. Queerness is (as the back cover of Cooper's anthology announces) inherently "transgressive," and transgression is naturally queer.

The differences between the anthologies, then, reflect the two ways in which minorities have traditionally related to

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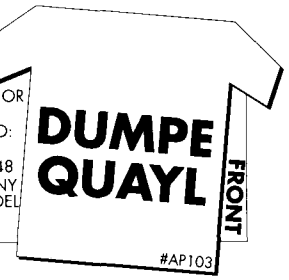

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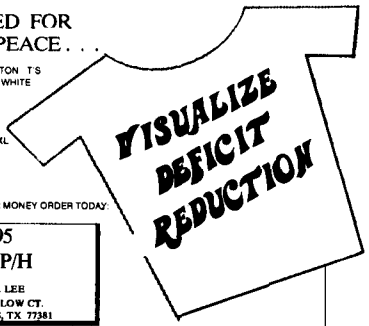

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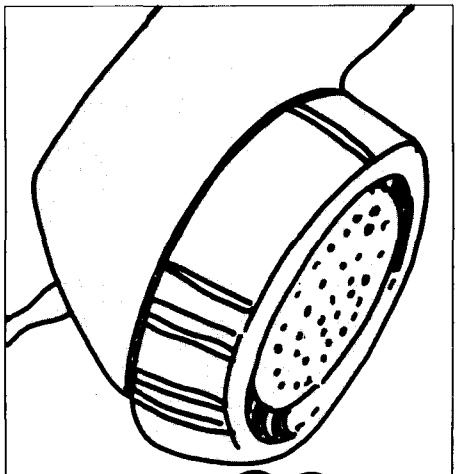

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the dominant culture. White reassures his readers that homosexuals are not so bad as people say, that "we are just like you." Cooper, playing Malcolm X to White's King, or Terminator to his Shane, counters that gays are worse than people think, that they do indeed defy everything that the mainstream holds dear.

Yet however different their rhetoric, in one important respect both editors agree. Cooper and White believe that the character of the literature derives from the nature of the individual writers. That is, gay literature is different because gay people are different. To some degree, this is common sense: whatever else gay literature might be, it is literature written by gay people. Still, this particular truism is also misleading. It implies that gay writers imbue their writing with something special that makes the literature essentially gay, and encourages us to search for this essence in people rather than in writing. Defining literature as an outgrowth of personality, Cooper and White ignore a fundamental danger of minority studies: that a certain way of describing the special character of gay literature may reinforce cultural clichés about who gay people are. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish a positive cultural characteristic from a negative cultural stereotype. No definition of minority literature can be any better than the concept of minority that underlies it. It is no less discriminatory to say that gays are naturally transgressive than to say that they are naturally hairdressers.

Neither Cooper nor White has fully considered how sexuality or any other special interest informs literature—or more generally, what it means to write minority fiction. Minorities do not write minority fiction because they cannot write as well as "major" writers; though he was doubly "minor," Baldwin was undeniably among the finest American writers of his generation. Nor does the minority status of their work arise from the fact that it deals only with issues relevant to a small subsector of the population: all writers depict general truths through specific experiences, and only later does rafting down the Mississippi or bullfighting in Pamplona seem universally significant.

In a sense, minorities do not write "minority" fiction at all. The minority label originates not with individual writers, but with a culture that makes a priori judgments that some subjects are universal and other subjects are merely personal. And superior literary skill does not really transcend these prejudices. In those masterpieces—*Moby-Dick* or *Remembrance of Things Past*—that contain elements of both the major and the minor, readers simply repress those aspects that seem like special interests. We remember the whiteness of the whale, but we forget Ishmael and Queequeg's night in bed.

Writers who self-consciously accept the minority (and minoritizing) label are faced with an additional problem. They wish to suggest that certain material not often represented in fiction is worthy of literary consideration. Classic gay novels like Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, and more recently Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*, Larry Duplechan's *Blackbird*, and Jack Fritscher's *Some Dance to Remember* all introduce readers to settings and psychologies that had not previously been depicted in literature. In so doing, they enlighten straight readers, but they also have a more particular mission for gay readers, which is to reassure them. They tell people who might otherwise have thought themselves abnormal that many share their sexual interests.

Yet this admirable desire to explore new literary material can itself turn limiting. In depicting homosexuality, novelists tend to focus on the small percentage of gay people's lives that is different, and to diminish the emphasis on the larger part of those lives that is presumably the same as everyone else's. The unintentional result is to reinforce the stereotype of gay difference, even to exoticize the sexual practices that they mean to naturalize. Novels about being gay have very little time to be about anything else. In putting homosexuality into literature, they tend to leave the world out of homosexuality.

The question remains, then, whether we can have a gay literature that is not merely about its own gayness, but is true to the variety of ways in which gays relate to each other and to the world. It is interesting to note that at present the possibility of such a complete representation is more fully realized outside the literary tradition of the novel. Science-fiction writers such as Samuel R. Delaney and Thomas M. Disch, mystery novelists such as Richard Stevenson and Michael Nava, and humorists like Joe Keenan place homosexual characters at the center of otherwise traditional genre situations. The very fact that these works are about other things—exploring worlds, solving murders, getting laughs—requires their authors to make their sexual points indirectly. Homosexuality in these popular works is simply taken for granted. And while the result is a fairly conventional use of the genres, these stories do manage to portray more fully the experience of gay people in the world than many more self-conscious works of gay literature.

The advantages of indirection are equally evident in another recent anthology, Essex Hemphill's *Brother to Brother:*

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New Writings by Black Gay Men. Hemphill's account is a ringing political indictment of the homophobia of the black community and the racism of the gay community. But in focusing on the relation of race to homosexuality, the authors are not especially concerned with elevating any particular image of homosexuality over any other. Though hardly reticent about their sexuality, the black gay authors in this volume introduce the topic only to emphasize struggle and supportiveness between and within the groups.

These stories are less about personal self-doubt than about making one's way in hostile social environments. Some are fairly straightforward attempts to record the emotions and experiences of this doubly invisible group. But in the most densely textured tales—Cary Alan Johnson's "Obi's Story," about transcontinental love, or Assoto Saint's "Hooked for Life," about a confrontation between a dying man's mother and his lover—homosexual desire is refracted against a backdrop of national and familial loyalties to offer a rich view of the complexity of black gay life. And in Hemphill's own poetic contributions—especially his moving elegy to Joseph Beam, the volume's original editor—the beauty of the literary language fully equals the power of the political lament.

After Stonewall, gay writers were impatient with the accommodations that previous generations had made in order to be permitted to discuss sexuality at all. With their new candor and their confrontational style, gay writers and queer writers of the past twenty years managed to open up literature to a serious examination of non-traditional sexual desires. But any opening up can become its own kind of trap. Once gay writers could not talk about sexuality. Now that seems to be all that they can talk about. Gay authors today face not only the commercial challenge of whether to write for a crossover market; they face also the aesthetic challenge of how to depict a world beyond the narrow confines of the individual consciousness. Such scope, which is the beginning of real literature, requires a more inclusive understanding of the ways in which people are gay, and a wider social sense of the environments in which homosexuals must live. If gay literature fails to address the diversity of which sexuality is only one facet, it truncates the experience of the homosexual life. Far from liberating ourselves, we may find that we have exchanged the closet for the pigeonhole.

DAVID VAN LEER teaches English at the University of California, Davis.

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What are the facts?

A recap of history. Some thumbnail history may be in order. Large numbers of Jews have been living in these territories since biblical times. Most of the Arabs living there are in fact relative newcomers. "Palestine" is the entire area now covered by Israel, including Judea/Samaria (the so-called "West Bank") *and* what is now the Kingdom of Jordan. It originally also included the Golan Heights, which later, in an agreement between England and France, were ceded to France, and to Syria as the successor in possession. In 1922, contrary to the Mandate of the League of Nations, the British severed the entire area east of the Jordan and gave it to the Hashemite Arabs for their assistance in World War I. Thus, fully 75% of Palestine, all of which under the Mandate and under the terms of the Balfour Declaration was meant to be a homeland for the Jewish people, was lost for that purpose. Only the area west of the Jordan was left for Jewish settlement.

"Why should the Arab countries and the 'West Bank' be the only places in the world where Jews are not allowed to live?"

How the West Bank became "Arab country". In 1947, after decades of strife between Arabs and Jews, the British decided to relinquish the Mandate. The UN stepped in and proposed a partition plan under which the country (west of the River) was to be divided into respective Arab and Jewish areas. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The Jews accepted the plan; the Arabs refused it out of hand. In 1948, on the twice truncated territory allotted to them by the U.N., the Jews declared their independence, and the state of Israel was born. On the same day, six Arab armies invaded the new-born state. In what can be described as an almost biblical miracle, the Jews defeated them. When an armistice was finally secured, however, TransJordan remained in possession of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; Egypt remained in possession of the Gaza Strip. TransJordan then renamed itself Jordan.

The Six-Day War. Once in possession of the "West Bank" and East Jerusalem, the Jordanians promptly proceeded to expel all Jews and systematically to desecrate and to destroy most Jewish sacred places, cemeteries and houses of worship. No Jews, regardless of citizenship were allowed into the "West Bank" or East Jerusalem, the locale of the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism. In 1967, Egyptian president Abdel Nasser joined by the same array of Arab armies that had unsuccessfully tried to destroy Israel at its birth in 1948, launched another war against Israel "to drive the Jews into the sea" and into oblivion, once and for all. But the Israelis utterly defeated the combined Arab might in the 6-Day War, one of the greatest military victories in history. When the dust of war settled, the Israelis had not only retained their national territory, but had repossessed the territories of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), the eastern part of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and had occupied the vast Sinai Peninsula.

It is clear from this abbreviated history that the Israeli claim to the "West Bank" is far stronger than that of the Arabs. About 100,000 Jews now live there. And why shouldn't they? Why should the Arab countries and the "West Bank" be the only places in the whole wide world where Jews are not allowed to live? How can 100,000 Jews living among 700,000 Arabs be the "greatest threat to peace"? How can our government be concerned about a new settlement of a few mobile homes on some barren Judean hills as the "greatest threat to peace", when we seem to be oblivious and totally unconcerned about the unrelenting hostility of the Arab countries, the de facto incorporation of Lebanon by Syria, the Scuds and chemical weapons still remaining in Iraq, and the relentless and ominous build-up of Syria's missile forces?

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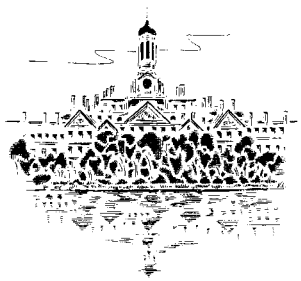
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Altered states

WHEN I WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT (doing a special field in African government) the continent's future was on many students' minds and curricula. It's not the case anymore, so what we know now about the region we know mostly from the news that jars its way past our indifference, news mostly of famines and massacres, which reinforces our stereotypes of Africa. Ciskei was the dateline for one such piece of news recently. It's an ugly little place, recognized only by those in Pretoria who created it. Of course, almost all of Africa's frontiers were drawn by white men for their own reasons. They were arbitrary lines, callously breaking up territorial swaths of one ethnic group and then putting three or four or ten such groups together in what the Europeans were pleased to call nation-states. These were precarious contrivances from the beginning. As Kwame Appiah has written, "how surprising it is that there was a moment of 'nationalism' at all." Within two weeks of the Congo's independence, for example, the indigenous Lunda and Bayeke of Katanga province, a wealthy region, seceded, unwilling to be the "milk cow" for the entire country. They lost, not least because the West sided with the trans-tribal state, now named Zaire. This was seen then, perhaps is still seen now, as a victory for African nationalism.

UNLIKE KATANGA, CISKEI IS ANYthing but resource-rich. Nonetheless, its forceable separation as a Xhosa homeland from the rest of South Africa is an offense to all who have struggled against apartheid. Earlier this month ANC cadres marched on Ciskei's borders, planning to dislodge the brutal brigadier who is its ruler. The march ended with twenty-eight dead, countless more wounded. NPR immediately informed its listeners that the killings had been unprovoked. Now we know that a massacre is precisely what the ANC wanted. You don't order a breakaway column of sprinters to take over government headquarters unless you want them shot. There will be more such planned sacrifices because ANC militants, especially Communists in the upper ranks, are committed not to negotiations with de Klerk's National Party and others but to what they term the "Leipzig option." But there is no option in South Africa as there once was in East Germany; the demonstrators are not committed to nonviolence, and the state is not about to wither away, not even Ciskei. The Leipzig option also assumes one other factor that the ANC knows is absent in South Africa. When the DDR collapsed in 1989 its successor, whatever its hue, was axiomatically German. In South Africa there is no such clear tribal inheritance. That is why the ANC, both claimant to the wider South African succession and functional tribune of the Xhosa, has no patience for politics and is going for broke. And this impatience is driving into the orbit of De Klerk's Nats an unlikely alliance of Inkatha Zulus, AZAPO "black consciousness" adherents, Pan-Africanists, Zion Christians, Indians, coloureds, and also those in the smaller and more threatened tribes. But I wouldn't bet on this mix making a nation either.



THE REALITY OF ethnic diversity in Africa seems, however, to escape *The New York Times*. In a recent editorial, "The Wisdom of Africa," the *Times* wrote that "black Africa offers a lesson on the wisdom of respecting the territorial integrity of all states whatever the mix of peoples." This wisdom, the paper points out, is that of the ruling elites, which through the Organization of African States "found common ground in defending the integrity of existing states." What this really means is that they were loath to undermine the norms under which they govern. In Africa, these norms are those of ethnic (often minority) domination, persecution, deportations, and murder. When there's drought, as in Somalia, famine becomes an instrument of genocide. In the Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Benin, Zaire, Zimbabwe, even Nigeria, killing doesn't have to wait for such golden opportunities. It is touching that the *Times* remains, in the face of this ethnic violence, committed to the ideal of non- and transethnic politics in established multiethnic states. One merely wonders why it is not so committed to such politics in New York.

PERHAPS THE MOST REMARKABLE truth about the facts now emerging from the archives of the former Soviet Union is that they seem to vindicate almost any kooky right-wing fantasy you can think of. It now turns out that there were, after all, MIAs left in Indochina after the U.S. withdrawal. Up until the day before yesterday, the only people who believed this were Stallone fans. But perhaps the tastiest morsel—though hardly the weightiest—to come our way in recent weeks concerns I. F. Stone. This spring a right-wing U.S. journalist and a former official of the U.S. Information Agency reported that ex-Soviet intelligence officers had told them that Stone was on the KGB payroll for at least fifteen years before 1968. These allegations are not evidence. As the *New Criterion* put it, the charge comes from a "dubious source—a former KGB officer with vast experience in the disinformation business." But the main source was a lieutenant general in the KGB under Andropov, and information he has provided during the last few years is much trusted. So, it might not be at all surprising if with Izzy Stone, as with that other romantic about communism, John Reed, the Kremlin had taken out a wholly superfluous ideological insurance policy.

THE TWO POLITICAL parties are now in the process of raising tens of millions of legislatively sanctioned soft, i.e., tax deductible, dollars to register voters and then get them out to vote. Both the Democrats and Republicans figure these expenditures are worthwhile. Probably this means that each party registers roughly equal numbers of voters, the Democrats mostly among the entitlement-seeking minorities, the Republicans among resentful whites. In my view this entire effort is not only a waste of energy and money; it also adds to the degradation of our politics, as much as did the corralling of voters to the polls by the big urban machines around the turn of the century. Free government assumes an informed and concerned voting populace. But these last-minute registrees are neither informed nor concerned. They're entitled to vote, God knows, but should we want them to? They've been induced to sign up by crude enticements of reward, both material and psychological. Voting also creates expectations of near-term gratification that will never be fulfilled. No wonder our candidates speak in sound bites; this part of the electorate has no patience for more. These quadrennial registration programs betray an oddly impoverished view of citizenship in that voting is its only expression. But voting is an act of responsibility, following upon other responsible and voluntary acts in the various communities that give citizens their complex identities. Try to explain this to our pols and you'll find out just how degraded our politics is.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Sneakers and Sneaks: A Free Trade Tale

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

The Bush administration likes to tell us that everybody benefits when foreign trade restrictions are relaxed. For instance, when U.S. companies set up factories in low-wage countries, the workers there get the benefit of good jobs, consumers here get the benefit of cheaper goods and the companies make lots of money. What about the U.S. workers who lose their jobs? They are supposed to get higher quality jobs in new factories that will take the place of the ones we lose. This is the argument often used in support of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which will soon be taken up in the Congress. It sounds good on paper, but when you look at what can actually happen, you have to wonder who the winners are.

Take the story of the Indonesian shoe factories that are now making Nike shoes. In the 1980s, Nike, along with a number of other U.S. shoe companies, closed its U.S. factories and moved production to plants in Third World countries. As a result, 65,000 U.S. footwear workers lost their jobs. The main reason for the move was cheap labor. Instead of paying an average of $6.94 per hour to unionized U.S. workers, Nike's subcontractors could hire Indonesian workers, for example, for approximately 14 cents an hour.

By 1991, 24,000 Indonesians, the majority of them women, were making Nike shoes under wretched conditions and for wretched wages. Jeffrey Ballinger, a labor rights advocate who spent over three years working in Indonesia, analyzes the monthly pay slip of one of these women in "The New Free-Trade Heel" (*Harper's*, August 1992). Her net pay for the month in question, including 63 hours of compulsory overtime, was $37—about half the retail price of one of the pairs of sneakers she makes.

The story could have ended happily if the President cared about enforcing laws against worker exploitation.

Some people argue that workers in Third World countries don't have standards like ours, so they are glad to work for wages that we find shocking. But the pay these women get is not a living wage—it is, Ballinger says, less than the Indonesian government's figure for "minimum physical need." And he cites a recent study by the International Labor Organization, an arm of the United Nations, which found that 88 percent of the Indonesian women working at these wages were malnourished.

Others would say that what goes on in these plants is none of our business. That seems to be Nike's attitude. Nike's general manager in Indonesia says the company has no reason to investigate reports of unfair labor practices: "It's not within our scope" ("Running a Business," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 20, 1991). And another Nike manager, interviewed by British Thames TV, says that questions about long hours and low wages are the business of "maybe the United Nations....I don't think it's something you can lay at a shoe company...." But whatever Nike may think, there are international standards for the treatment of workers, and they are part of U.S. public policy.

For example, the Generalized System of Preferences extends valuable tariff relief to U.S. trading partners, but if there is evidence that a country is allowing its workers' rights to be trampled, the U.S. trade representative can slap the tariffs back on. The AFL-CIO has lodged several complaints to try to get the U.S. to move on the infractions of labor standards in Indonesia, and the complaints have gotten results—of a kind. In response to one of them, an Indonesian manpower official ordered his inspectors to issue 400 "official reports of prosecution" (4 per inspector). But the purpose of the order was not to turn over a new leaf. It was to show that the government was doing *something* and to give the U.S. an excuse to continue favored status, even though massive violations continued. The point is, we could get significant changes—if President Bush wanted them.

Who has benefited from Nike's having its shoes made in Third World factories? Certainly not the American workers who were fired. Undoubtedly many of them are still unemployed or working at jobs with lower wages and poor or no fringe benefits. Certainly not American consumers. They are paying very high prices for Nikes relative to what the shoes cost to produce: The Thames TV show put the cost for materials and labor on a pair of Nike trainers at $5.95. And not the Indonesian workers, who put in long hours for miserable wages.

Does Nike need to do business this way in order to survive? Apparently not. Jeffrey Ballinger reports that Bata, a Canadian firm that also uses factories in Indonesia, pays its workers wages that are well above the minimum, together with benefits, while producing shoes for the Indonesian market that are sold at approximately $8 a pair.

This story could have had a happy ending—and it still could if the President were interested in enforcing our laws against worker exploitation. It also raises some serious questions about NAFTA. Unless the treaty is properly put together—and unless the laws and safeguards that make it up are properly enforced—NAFTA could be a disaster. It could result in a huge loss of jobs in the U.S. and massive exploitation of Mexican workers at the same time that American consumers continued to pay high prices. As we can see from the Nike story, the benefits of free trade are not automatic.

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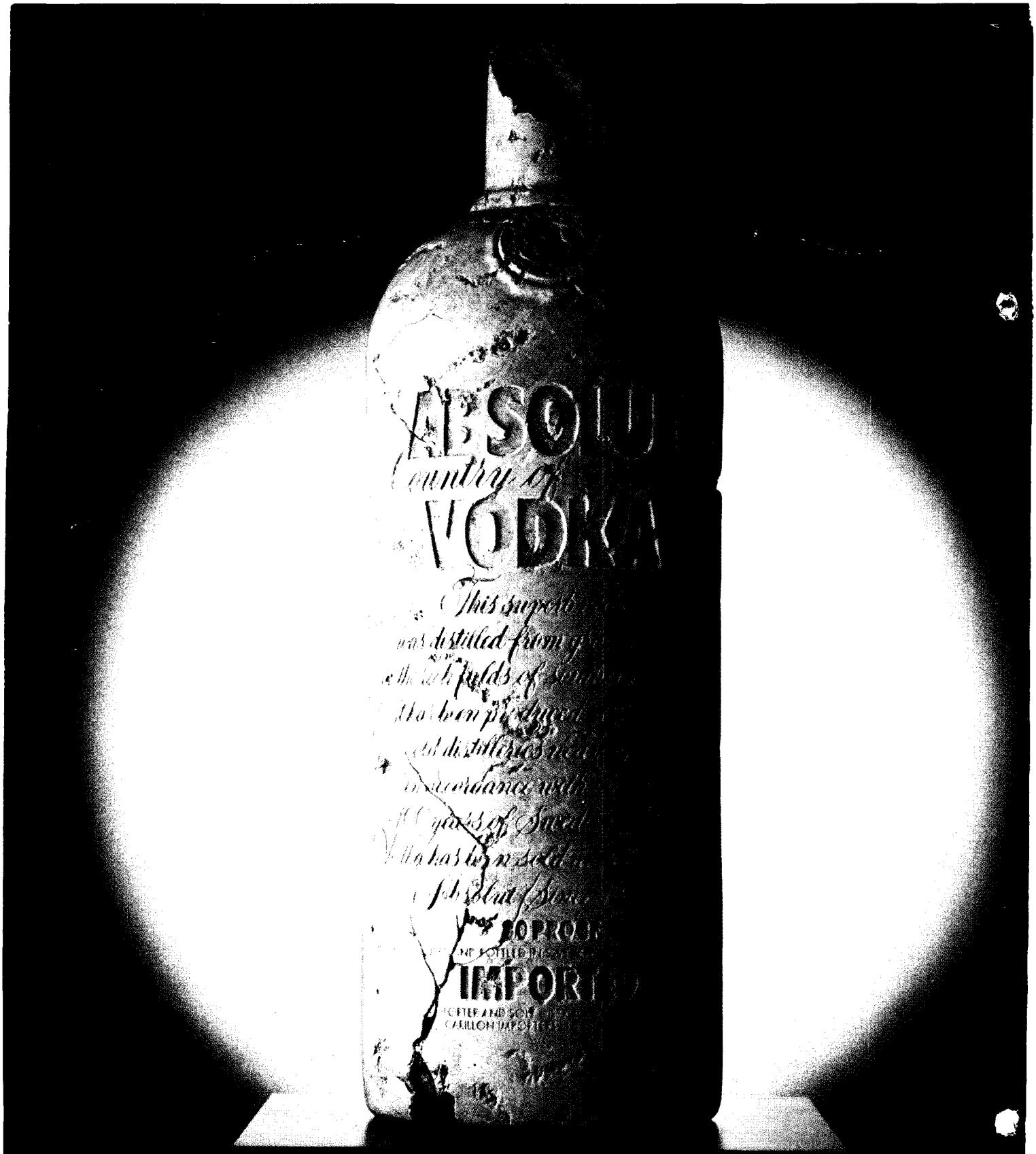

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